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ABSTRACT

Of potential interest to small towns in rural areas, this report describes England's first attempt at applying to a rural area the concept of a multi-agency information and advice center based on a library. The comprehensive review covers all phases of the project: (1) identification of a community's information and advice needs; (2) consultation with existing providers to design an integrated service; (3) establishment of a co-operative management committee and a local liaison group; (4) setting up an information center with shared use of premises; (5) administration of an integrated service through sharing resources and responsibilities; (6) development of joint publicity and marketing of the information services; and (7) identification of a community's reactions to a new service. Part I sets forth the objectives of the project, describes South Molton and its rural hinterland including the area's library and information services, and summarizes steps in project implementation. Part II covers the operation of the project including funding, administration, publicity, and community support. The report emphasizes continuous liaison and cooperation among many organizations in developing a sound basis from which to try to meet local needs. Appendices provide references, a directory of agencies, questionnaires, survey results, sample newsletters, and other related documents. (JHZ)

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INFORMATION FOR A RURAL COMMUNITY

David G Venner
and
Sally Cotton

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the South Molton Community Information Project

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INFORMATION FOR A RURAL COMMUNITY:

the South Molton Community Information Project

DAVID G VENNER AND SALLY COTTON

Library and Information Research Report 40

3

Abstract

The South Molton Community Information Project was set up in March 1980 to research and develop the role of South Molton Library in relation to the information and advice needs of the town and its rural hinterland. The library authority worked in close co-operation with the Community Council of Devon, the Citizens Advice Bureau area office and local providers of information and advice.

The methodology included two surveys of need ("before" and "after") and an analysis of user reactions; monitoring of the development of the Information Centre; promotion of the Centre by means of village representatives and a monthly broadsheet; and assessing the contribution of the library to the work of the other provider agencies — and vice versa.

The report concludes that library authorities have an essential role to play in the development of community information in rural areas, irrespective of whether or not the service is provided in the library itself.

The project was extended for a third year to establish local management, apply for local funding and to consolidate and develop the work of the Information Centre. Terms of reference were agreed, a Centre Committee set up and a part-time co-ordinator appointed. Funding for the future was provided by county, district and parish councils.

The broadsheet and village representative network continued to promote the Centre and its agencies. Community information displays in the branch and mobile libraries and local information directories were compiled.

The report emphasises the importance of continuous liaison, co-operation and mutual support between many organisations in developing a sound basis from which to try to meet local needs.

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Foreword

Alison Shute, County Librarian of Devon

In the second half of the 1970s and in common with many other authorities, Devon felt the need to re-examine the traditional informational role of the library service.

Following an earlier Research and Development report by a member of my staff*, discussion with the British Library identified the need to study the role of a market town library in the provision of community information. Subsequent talks involving the Community Council of Devon and the Citizens Advice Bureau Area Officer led to the emergence of South Molton as an appropriate community for study. Overwhelming local support at a public meeting held to discuss the proposed project, coupled with the availability of suitable accommodation at South Molton, confirmed this view.

There can be no doubt that in such a project the strength of the local co-operation is crucial — and in South Molton this has been given in full measure. Similarly, the degree of staff commitment required at all levels cannot be over-emphasised and in this too the South Molton project has been well served.

The work at South Molton developed in two quite distinct parts. First came David Venner's two years as project officer, which involved both initial research and the setting up of the Centre. By the time his work ended, the South Molton Information Centre was a well established local facility, but was still dependent upon national research funding.

We were, therefore, grateful to the British Library for the extension of one year which gave us the time to seek sources of permanent funding on a local basis. The second part of the report gives details of the extension year during which Sally Cotton combined her role as local librarian with that of the Centre co-ordinator.

During the whole period of the South Molton project, changes in community information provision were taking place in other parts of the

* Maguire, M L G. *Library services for small communities: a state-of-the-art review.* British Library, 1978. BL R&D Report 5444.

country. These changes were closely monitored nationally by the London-based Community Information Project. Elaine Kempson and Nick Moore, who were part of that team, have kindly added to this report a summary of the national context against which the Devon initiative must be seen.

Devon has gained immeasurably from the experience of South Molton and in return offers some messages for other parts of the country. Not least of these are the benefits to be gained from all three levels of local government — county, district, and parish councils — working together for the community as a whole.

This report ends with the South Molton Information Centre firmly established as the main focal point for a wide range of advice and information services for the whole community.

From this work has emerged a new line of enquiry for Devon — information technology in rural areas. With micro-technology developing rapidly, it would be easy for rural areas to become left behind in yet another field. Public Information in Rural Areas: a technology experiment (PIRATE) — involves new British Library-funded research into the possibilities and practicalities of new technology. Much of this work will be based at South Molton, although other Devon towns will also be involved.

Our thanks are due to all those who have contributed to the success of the venture.

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Miss Alison Shute
Mr Owen Baker
Mr Roy Hutton
Mr Ken Hunt

— Project Committee:
Mrs Jean Dunkley
Mr John Usmar

— Project Consultants:
Mrs Helene Curtis
Ms Elaine Kempson
Mr Geoffrey Smith, OBE
Mr Nick Moore
Ms Judith Bowen
Ms Charlotte Hursey

— British Library Research and Development Department:
Miss Margaret O'Hare
Dr Richard Snelling

and to all organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of the South Molton Community Information Centre.

David Venner
Sally Cotton

Note

Different parts of this report were written at different times. There are references to future events which have since taken place.

PART I

David G Venner

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

The objectives were defined in the project proposal (Devon Library Services, 1979) as:

— to research and develop the role of the library in relation to the information and advice needs of the town and its deeply rural hinterland;

— to work in close co-operation with the Community Council of Devon, the Citizens Advice Bureau's (CAB) Area Officer and other information providers to develop an integrated approach to meeting these needs.

The project proposal also recognised that:

— there is need at national level to examine the relevance of traditional reference and information provision in rural libraries in terms both of content and purpose, and to assess the informational contribution which the library can make to the community, particularly in relation to co-operation with other information and advice agencies;

— small market towns in rural areas may be particularly suited to shared use of library premises by a range of advice agencies on a surgery basis, where suitable accommodation exists.

1.2 Scope of the work

The project has gathered experience in the following areas:

— identification of a community's information and advice needs;

— consultation with existing providers to design an integrated service;

— establishment of a co-operative management committee and a local liaison group;

— setting up an information centre with shared use of premises;

— administration of an integrated service through sharing resources and responsibilities;

— development of joint publicity and marketing of the information services;

— identification of a community's reactions to a new service.

The findings of the project will be particularly helpful to small towns in rural areas; they may also be applicable to other situations, e.g. neighbourhoods of larger towns and cities.

1.3 Relationship to other studies

The South Molton project is unique. It represents the first attempt at applying to a rural area the concept of a multi-agency information and advice centre based on a library. Thus there are no similar projects for direct comparison. The nearest relation on a comparable scale is the Aid Centre at Bretton Library, Peterborough, where the CAB, consumer unit, careers, community health council and local councillors held advice sessions at the library.

The South Molton project is a direct descendent of the National Consumer Council (NCC)/National Council of Social Service (NCSS) study, *The right to know* (NCC/NCSS, 1978). One of its main recommendations was that "provision and promotion of information and advice in rural areas should be the joint responsibility of rural community councils, citizens' advice bureaux and local authorities". This recommen-

dation is reflected in the composition of the South Molton Information Centre project committee.

The development of the South Molton project's Information Centre owes much to the study by a working party of the Library Association (LA), formed "to examine the practical aspects of setting up community information services in public libraries" and to prepare guidelines (LA, 1979). Owen Baker, the first project head for South Molton, was also a member of the LA working party.

For "outreach" activities, the South Molton project has borrowed ideas and methods from other initiatives. The village representative scheme is an adaptation of schemes introduced by several rural community councils, e.g. Shropshire and Devon. The broadsheet (*News from the South Molton Information Centre*) again is not a new idea, but an adaptation of other examples to meet the requirements of the study area.

2 Community Information in Rural Areas

2.1 Current patterns of provision

The provision of community information services nationally is reviewed in several publications, e.g. NCC (1977), NCC/NCSS (1978), LA (1979) and Clark and Unwin (1980).

Two main features emerge from these reviews. First, the national distribution of information/advice services is extremely patchy, with many rural areas and some towns being inadequately covered. Secondly, distribution of, and access to, services have changed markedly in recent years. Factors such as centralisation, decline of public transport, and loss of informal sources such as village schoolmaster, policeman, doctor or clergyman, have contributed to a real problem of access to information and advice for many people in rural areas.

On the positive side, new CABx and independent advice centres have been created (an example in the South-West being the Minehead Community Information Bureau) and welfare rights officers appointed, for example, in west Scotland. Several libraries have improved their services to the disadvantaged by introducing community information services themselves (LA, 1979). Local radio, increased car ownership, and improved access to telephones have also helped to counterbalance the effects of the losses.

Nevertheless, information and advice services in many rural areas could be described as "too few and far between" to meet the needs of the population adequately. Those in urban areas often have not been able to "reach out" to serve their surrounding rural areas. The needs may have been recognised but the extra costs involved, together with a lack of political will, have been barriers to significant progress.

2.2 Definition of needs

People's needs are notoriously difficult to define and measure. Childers (1975) comments that need is not a directly observable concept. He suggests that need can be traced in three ways: what people say, what people do, and what people are. The first of these, in practice, is a

combination of what an individual says he needs and what a professional says his client needs.

Beal (1979) makes a similar point. "In providers' terms ... I take information to be: when people do not know what we believe they ought to know". She recognises the blatant value judgement involved in this definition, and adds that "as a society ... we probably do have some sort of minimal consensus on what people ought to know — what information people ought to have in order to be able to lead better lives, to be informed and to be able to cope with a complex society".

How do we find out whether or not people are getting the information they need (or the information we think they need)? Some surveys ask the people themselves what they need to know; others ask the providers of information and other professionals what people need to know. In practice, perhaps the latter comes first: providers of information and advice should be approached to ascertain what services are currently provided and to identify the gaps where needs might arise. This gives some indication of which sections of the community are not being served and which subject areas are not being covered. A survey of people's own perception of need can then be designed with some background knowledge of what questions are worth asking.

Section 5.6 describes the methods used to assess need in the South Molton area, and discusses the results obtained. Appendix 1 describes methods and findings of some other relevant projects.

Map 1
Regional Location of Study Area

Map 2
Project Study Area

3 The Study Area

3.1 Choice of the area

South Molton was chosen as the location for this project for five reasons: the town was a natural focus for a large rural area, potentially an ideal situation for a static information centre aiming to meet the needs of a rural hinterland; the library was centrally and prominently situated, important in terms of access for the public; three vacant rooms were available on the first floor above the library, providing suitable and spacious accommodation; there was potential for bringing together existing and new services to provide information and advice to the public; the proposal to establish the project at South Molton was favourably received by a meeting of representatives of local organisations.

3.2 Definition of the area

The boundaries of the study area were not precisely defined in the project proposal. Mention was simply made that "South Molton serves a large rural hinterland" and "the former rural district consisted of 29 parishes and most of these parishes still look to South Molton as their centre".

At an early meeting of the project committee, it was decided that the Information Centre should aim to cater for the needs of the whole of the former rural district, plus the parish of High Bray (formerly in Barnstaple Rural District but linked to a parish within the former South Molton Rural District for parish council, church, Women's Institute and other purposes). For detailed surveys and other research, however, the committee agreed that the southern and eastern fringe parishes (Burrington, Chulmleigh, Cheldon, East Worlington, Witheridge, Creacombe, Rackenford and East Anstey) would be excluded, to produce an area of more manageable size (roughly 15 miles from east to west and 10 miles from north to south).

Chulmleigh (about 10 miles south of South Molton) posed a difficult problem. On the one hand, the presence of a library there (the responsibility of the South Molton librarian) offered considerable scope for building on existing services and contacts. On the other hand, the inclusion of a second library within the study area would have confused the research into the role of South Molton library. In addition, the fact

that Chulmleigh is a small centre in itself with more facilities than the average North Devon village, would have introduced a "secondary focus", again detracting somewhat from the required emphasis on South Molton.

Several of the "southern fringe" parishes look to Chulmleigh as their immediate service centre, and the "eastern fringe" parishes tend to orientate towards Tiverton. The 23 remaining parishes are, therefore, those which, in theory at least, look to South Molton as their centre. In practice, anomalies occur and for this reason a flexible approach was adopted. Thus Swimbridge, although nearer to Barnstaple than to South Molton, was keen to be associated with the project, largely because children from the parish attend South Molton School and Community College, providing a strong link with the town. Charles and High Bray parishes, on the other hand, tend to look to Barnstaple for many functions and so had less connection with the project despite being nearer to South Molton.

The area covered by the mobile library service based at South Molton is rather larger than the study area, extending further towards Crediton and, until January 1981, including Landkey in the west. When the latter was "transferred" to the Barnstaple mobile library (following a general re-organisation of mobile libraries in Devon) the community felt that, with this link broken, it had a reduced interest in the South Molton project. This highlights the need for flexibility in determining the area to be covered by such a project and the need to follow natural groupings and loyalties as far as possible rather than local government boundaries.

3.3 South Molton and its hinterland

3.3.1 General

The study area, as defined above, extends from the foothills of Exmoor (over 1,500 feet above sea level) in the north, to agricultural mid-Devon in the south. It is traversed by numerous river valleys, often narrow and steep-sided, making cross-country journeys slow and sometimes difficult (see also Section 3.3.4).

South Molton is 12 miles from Barnstaple (the administrative centre of North Devon District and of the county council's North Devon Area), 35 miles from Exeter (the county town) and 38 miles from Taunton (centre for, amongst other things, the North Devon Telephone District). South Molton was designated as a "key inland town" by Devon County Council

in the county development plan, and the neighbouring villages of Bishop's Nympton, Chittlehampton, Chulmleigh, North Molton and Witheridge as "key villages" (Devon County Council, 1968). In the draft county structure plan of 1979, South Molton was listed as one of eight "priority towns in remoter areas" (Devon County Council, 1979a).

The town is proud of its long history as an important local centre (it was first granted the right to hold a market in the 14th century). Formerly a borough and the centre of a rural district, South Molton now has a town council and the right to elect a mayor. It continues to exercise a stronger influence over a wider area than many a town of its size.

3.3.2 Population

South Molton reached its peak, in population terms (about 4,800), in the middle of the 19th century. By 1871 it had declined to just under 4,000 and in 1901 it was back to its 1802 level of around 3,000. The borough reached its lowest population total for more than a century (2,832) in 1931, since when it has steadily climbed to its present total of about 3,600 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

The rural district (i.e. the pre-1974 administrative unit minus South Molton itself) has followed a different pattern in the past 50 years, declining from 9,600 in 1931 to its current figure of about 9,140. In the South Molton area, the general reasons for rural decline were exacerbated by the fact that the Devon and Somerset Railway effectively bypassed the town. More favourably sited markets drew the vital market trade away. The decline of the woollen trade was also a significant factor. Morgan (1981), however, produces firm evidence to support the view that, whilst the town was in economic and demographic decline, there were considerable improvements in the social sense. Decline was therefore not complete and all-embracing.

The revival of the town and surrounding area in the last 20-30 years has mainly been due to the building of a new livestock market, the attraction of businesses to industrial sites on the edge of the town, and the building of a considerable amount of new housing. A new health centre, secondary school (South Molton School and Community College), and swimming pool are examples of further improvements dating from this period.

Much of the population increase, however, has been due to the choice of the South Molton area for retirement by an increasing number of people. This is reflected in the age structure of the population (1971 data — 1981 figures so far available are in parentheses).

Age Group	*S Molton RD*	*Devon*	*UK*
Under 15	23% (20%)	21% (20%)	24%
15 — retirement age	56% (57%)	57% (57%)	60%
Retirement age	21% (23%)	22% (23%)	16%

This clearly has implications with regard to the type of information and advice enquiries to be expected, and the questionnaire results illustrate this point (see Section 5).

Another significant factor to be taken into account is the population density. The following table emphasises the scattered nature of the study area population:

	Popn.	*Area (hectares)*	*Density*
UK	56m	24.4m	2.29/ha (594/sq mile)
Devon	952,000	672,081	1.42/ha (369/sq mile)
South Molton	3,599	2,392	1.50/ha (390/sq mile)
Study area (including South Molton)	9,287	36,975	0.25/ha (65/sq mile)
3 most populous parishes*	2,556	12,393	0.21/ha (54/sq mile)
Remainder**	3,132	22,190	0.14/ha (36/sq mile)

* Bishop's Nympton, Chittlehampton and North Molton (av. popn. = 852)

** 17 parishes (av. popn. = 184)

3.3.3 Employment

The main employers in the South Molton area are High Temperature Engineers (employing approximately 340) and Aaronson Brothers, chipboard manufacturers (employing approximately 370). There are several smaller engineering and light industrial concerns, in addition to the usual range of service and retail businesses, schools, banks and offices.

In 1971, the population of employees in the three major sectors of employment were as follows:

	South Molton	*Devon*	*UK*
Primary	11%	5%	3%
Manufacturing	5%	23%	39%
Service	84%	72%	58%

The importance of agriculture and other primary producers in the hinterland is reflected in the following data for the three largest villages:

	North Molton	*Bishop's Nympton*	*Chittlehampton*
Primary	43.2%	42.3%	33.3%
Manufacturing	5.4%	11.5%	10.0%
Service	51.4%	46.2%	56.7%

(1971 census data quoted by Devon County Council in submission to Development Commission (Devon County Council, 1978A)) — 1981 data not yet available.

Unemployment in the Barnstaple Employment Office Area (which includes the whole of the former South Molton Rural District) was 7.1% in 1976 and 10.2% in October 1981. Whilst precise figures are not available for the South Molton area alone, the level of unemployment in this part of the area has been consistently below the rate for the area as a whole. Nevertheless, redundancies have increased in recent months as a result of the recession. The nearest Job Centres and unemployment benefit offices are at Barnstaple and at Tiverton (20 miles from South Molton but nearer to eastern parts of the study area than is Barnstaple).

3.3.4 Communications

South Molton is on the A361 trunk road linking Taunton with Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. The A373 to Tiverton via Witheridge passes through the south-east of the study area, whilst the A377 Barnstaple to Exeter road skirts the south-west. "B" roads radiate from South Molton to the north (B3226 to Blackmoor Gate), west (B3227 to Umberleigh) and south-east (B3221 from Bish Mill to Tiverton via Rackenford), giving an overall "spokes of a wheel" pattern, with South Molton at the hub. Between the "spokes" are numerous minor roads, mostly narrow, hilly and winding, which connect the settlements and isolated farms to the network of "A" and "B" roads. Of the 22 rural parishes in the study area, four settlements

are on "A" roads, one is on a "B" road, and no fewer than 17 are on minor roads. Rivers hinder communication by virtue of the detours that are necessary to reach the bridges, and the nature of the terrain (hills of 1 in 4 gradient are common) and climate (heavy snowfalls are not uncommon) means that many of the minor roads are at times impassable for several days. In peak holiday periods the main roads through the area are often congested with traffic.

A major road scheme, the North Devon Link Road designed to improve access to, and take heavy traffic from, the towns and villages between Tiverton and Barnstaple, has been the subject of much debate and a public enquiry. Stage I from the M5 to Tiverton was commenced in 1981. Work on Stage II, the remainder of the route, scheduled to pass just north of South Molton, is due to begin in the late 1980s.

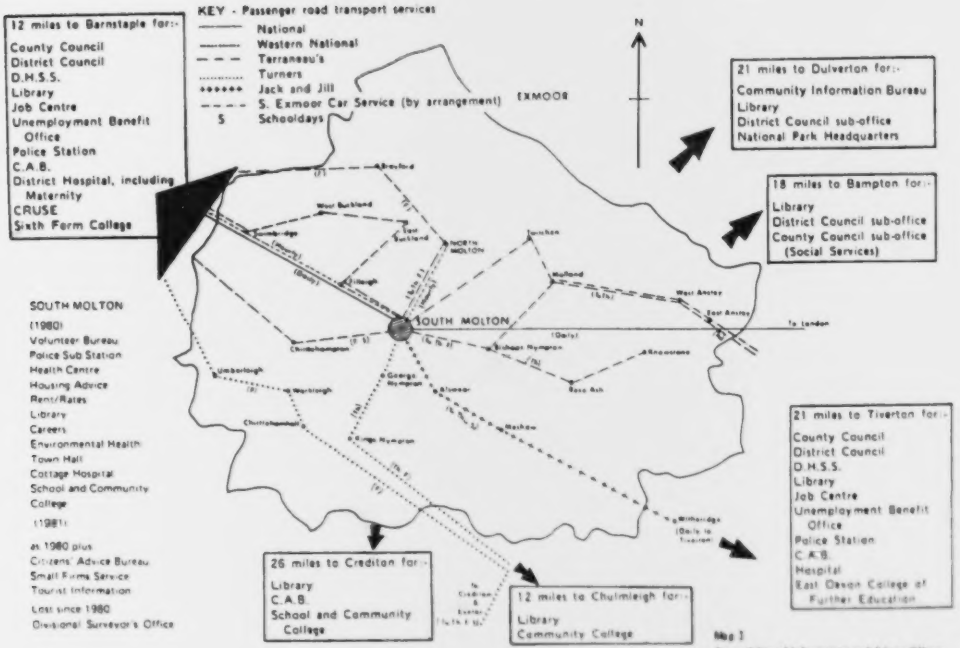
Bus services are provided by three independent operators and by the Western National Bus Company. The minimum service enjoyed by all but a few of the parishes is a Thursday market day bus into South Molton and back again. Thus everyone seems to be "in town" on a Thursday, the population probably doubling as a result. An express coach service runs daily from Barnstaple, through South Molton and Tiverton to London (see Map 3 for the frequency of bus services).

The Exmoor Car Service, set up with the help of the county council and Department of Transport as one of the RUTEX experiments, operates in the Twitchen/Molland/Anstey area on the fringe of Exmoor, and offers lifts to 270-300 people each year. A similar volunteer transport scheme was started in May 1981 by the South Molton and District Volunteer Bureau, providing lifts to health centres, hospitals and for shopping and other journeys where the client is not able to use conventional services.

The North Devon railway branch line from Exeter to Barnstaple skirts the south-west of the study area with stations at King's Nympton, Portsmouth Arms and Umberleigh (all at least seven miles from South Molton). There are still 10 trains running each way per day, although not all stop at every station.

3.3.5 Voluntary organisations

For a town of its size, South Molton has a surprisingly wide range of voluntary organisations, many of them covering much of the rural district as well as the town itself.



Map 1
Accessibility of Information and Advice Offices

In addition to the Volunteer Bureau, there are local branches or groups of the Women's Institute, Lions, Rotary (with Inner Wheel and Rotaract), Round Table (and Ladies Circle), Probus and Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes. Other welfare organisations include the St John's Ambulance, Women's Royal Voluntary Service ("meals on wheels" only) and Friends of the Cottage Hospital. Youth groups include Young Farmers, a "59 Club" (11-16), Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies, and Majorettes. There is also a playgroup and a mother's union, Methodist Women's Fellowship, Congregational Guild and Women's Bright Hour. For the elderly, there is a Sunshine Club (over 60s) and an Old Age Pensioners Association. For the retired and disabled, Amory House offers a range of facilities including television and games and a hot lunch on most weekdays. There is a Choral and Operatic Society, a Town Band, Horticultural Society, Royal Observer Corps and Model Engineering Club. The many sports clubs include football, rugby, tennis, bowling, archery, badminton and motor clubs.

In the surrounding area, many of the villages have their own Women's Institute, youth groups, religious, sports and social clubs.

3.3.6 Statutory bodies

A borough from 1590-1967, South Molton town then became a rural borough within the rural district of South Molton. In 1974, the rural district council services were taken over by North Devon District Council, but the town council retained control of its parks and many other functions. It owns and manages property, including 350 acres of agricultural land, the town hall, Pannier Market, and several other buildings including 1 East Street which houses the library and the Information Centre.

The district council has a presence in the town, with offices for housing advice, rent and rates, and environmental health services, each of which operates on two days a week at 8 East Street. Near by is the health centre with six doctors in two practices and the usual range of nursing and other services.

County council services include the secondary school (South Molton School and Community College), junior school, infant school, and the library. The County Careers Service formerly opened an office once a week at 36 East Street, now transferred to the Information Centre. A Divisional Surveyor's Office was removed to Barnstaple in 1981, although the depot and workshops remain in South Molton. The town

still has the status of a Petty Sessional Division, despite recent pressure to merge it with the Barnstaple Division.

3.4 The library and mobile library

3.4.1 Premises

The library premises are centrally and prominently sited on the north-east corner of the Square, through which most visitors or shoppers coming to South Molton are likely to walk or drive. At present the centre of the Square is used for car parking, although a pedestrianisation scheme is under consideration; further parking space (free on market day) exists about 100 yards away.

The library consists of a lending section, children's library and a small general reference collection, with a total shelf display stock of approximately 7,000 books. The layout is disadvantageous in that the three sections are on different levels, with two or three steps between each room; nevertheless some potential exists for enlarging the public space.

The mobile library service employs a one-man-operated three-ton vehicle (Dodge diesel). Anything larger would not be able to negotiate the narrow lanes connecting many of the 136 stops covered either weekly, fortnightly or monthly on 10 different routes. Having such a good coverage of the study area, the mobile library provided the project with an excellent medium for publicity and other contacts, although its small size and the short duration of most of the stops precluded any interviewing of clients.

3.4.2 Staffing

The full-time librarian (who has a keen interest in community information) also has responsibility for the dual-use library at Chulmleigh School. There is also a mobile library assistant (who also drives the van), two part-time assistants and a relief worker at South Molton and one part-time assistant at Chulmleigh.

3.4.3 Neighbouring libraries

Other branch libraries around the study area (in an anti-clockwise direction from the north) are: Lynton, Great Torrington, Chulmleigh (all North Devon Area), Crediton (Central Area), Tiverton, Bampton (East

Devon Area) and Dulverton (West Somerset). (See Map 2 for locations of these towns and distances from South Molton.)

Mobile libraries covering the surrounding rural area are based at Barnstaple, Okehampton, Crediton, Tiverton and Minehead.

3.5 Existing provision of information and advice

Full lists of agencies — both statutory and voluntary — offering information or advice in the South Molton area are given in Appendix 2. Map 3 gives the location of the most important agencies to indicate their dispersal and, in some cases, inaccessibility.

In South Molton itself, the main agencies formed prior to March 1980 were the library itself, the Volunteer Bureau, the district council (housing advice, rent and rates and environmental health) and the careers service. Town, district and county councillors, and the North Devon MP, all individually dealt with numerous requests for information. To these can be added the health centre, town hall, community college, museum, National Farmers' Union office, banks, solicitors, accountants, police station and post office, all involved to varying degrees in the provision of information and advice, as are the churches, voluntary organisations like the St John's Ambulance and individuals such as school teachers, postmen, ambulance drivers and so on.

The Volunteer Bureau must be singled out for special mention. As the only generalist voluntary agency in a small town, the South Molton bureau had developed a "catch-all" service, endeavouring to cover the full range of information, advice and practical needs in the community. For example, help with form-filling and welfare benefit claims was given in addition to visiting, transporting and running errands for the elderly. Recognition of the value of this service was demonstrated by the strong rebuttal by leading members of the community of a local newspaper report that South Molton was "badly off for information and advice services".

3. Needs not met at the start of the project

As part of the national survey of rural information and advice needs conducted by Women's Institutes in 1977/78 the villages of West Buckland, Chittlehampton and King's Nympton made returns. Both West Buckland and Chittlehampton referred to Barnstaple CAB as being

adequate to their needs although it was nine miles from each village. West Buckland also mentioned the local post office. Chittlehampton Women's Institute referred to informal sources such as doctor, vicar, councillors and Methodist minister, and felt that generally there was help available for those who asked for it. King's Nympton was the only Institute to answer "yes" to the question "do you need a local information/advice person/service in your area?" (National Federation of Women's Institutes).

Reactions to the newspaper report referred to above, give a few hints about need. One correspondent commented that "sometimes in a small community like South Molton people do not want to go to local bodies to discuss their problems with people they know and instead travel to the Citizens Advice Bureau in Barnstaple". The CAB statistics reveal that in the year preceding March 1980, 123 people known to be from South Molton visited or telephoned that bureau. Another correspondent said that "we could do with a Citizens Advice Bureau in the town" but went on to commend the work of existing organisations.

The Community Council of Devon, through its many contacts with village organisations, felt that South Molton was not exceptional in its needs but was rather representative of the many small market towns in similar situations.

In summary, and with the additional knowledge gained during the following two years, the position of South Molton in March 1980 could fairly be described in the same way as that of Braunton in 1977. Although a somewhat different type of community (a large village not far from Barnstaple) it was experiencing a similar set of circumstances, as described by the Women's Institute:

> "Without a local centre to deal with queries and complaints, many people 'give up' and the help they require is unused by being out of reach — many complaints require 'on the spot' action to be dealt with effectively — the delaying process of getting to Barnstaple and placing them in the queue for consideration means they lose impact, or the plaintiff loses heart or simply just doesn't bother in the first place. This is a big village — it needs an official centre of its own to deal with ... queries — and all services to be centralised under one roof so that help being sought does not require embarking on a marathon from one spread out centre to another".
>
> (National Federation of Women's Institutes.)

4 Setting Up The Project

4.1 The proposal

The origins of the project are outlined in the Foreword.

The impetus for preparation of a formal proposal came from Devon Library Services, and an informal steering group was formed in May 1978 to monitor its progress. The group consisted of the following members:

— Owen Baker (Principal Assistant, Information Services, Devon Library Services)

— Jean Dunkley (Area Officer, Devon and Cornwall, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB))

— John Usmar (Director, Community Council of Devon).

A proposal was prepared outlining the objectives and methods of the project, describing the study area and its present information provision, and summarising previous experience and studies in the community information field. The proposal was submitted to the British Library Research and Development Department in May 1979, and was approved in November 1979.

Following formal approval of the proposal, the steering group was formalised into a project committee. In May 1980, Owen Baker was succeeded as project head by Roy Hutton; and the project officer (see below) joined it in March 1980. In both size and composition, the project committee proved to be an effective and supportive group. Its members all held senior managerial positions in their respective organisations, and so were able to speak and act on their behalf with minimal delay; their commitment to the project was clearly demonstrated by the amount of time which they devoted to it. The committee formed an important link between the local level, at which the project officer was inevitably most involved, and the county and national levels.

4.2 Pre-proposal consultation

An important requirement from the project was the assurance, sought by the British Library from the county council, that "sympathetic

consideration be given to the continuance of the information role established in the selected library, provided that it is found to be fulfilling a public need".

The Amenities and Countryside Committee of Devon County Council — responsible within the county administration for the library services — from whom this assurance was sought, had agreed to back the application to the British Library provided that the project met with the approval and support of the various relevant agencies in and around South Molton. These were not specified at the time, but it was implied that they should include agencies both directly and indirectly involved in the provision of information and advice.

A meeting to discuss the proposal was held at South Molton library on 2 February 1979. Twenty-two people (local councillors, including the Town Mayor, and representatives of local organisations) attended (see Appendix 3). During discussion, it became clear that there would be overwhelming support for the project, and the following motion was proposed and unanimously supported:

> "This meeting supports the application of Devon County Council Amenities and Countryside Committee to the British Library for financial support to give effect to an experimental and pioneering project in South Molton and district to coordinate a rural information network."

All agencies represented at the meeting were subsequently kept informed of developments, although informal discussions before the meeting had been limited to those organisations likely to be directly involved in the project, e.g. the Volunteer Bureau, the nearest CAB and the South Molton Archive. Full and systematic consultation was not in fact possible before the appointment of a full-time project officer, because of the commitment elsewhere of existing library staff. This will be a major consideration in other areas where the feasibility of a similar project is being investigated.

4.3 Individual agencies

It was clear from the start that certain agencies already providing information and/or advice, would be natural choices for involvement in the project, whilst others would require more thoughtful selection. The following criteria (not in order of priority) were implicit in making a balanced selection:

— representation of both voluntary and statutory sectors

— a balance between generalist and specialist agencies

— potential for benefitting from, and contributing to, the library's resources

— suitability for sharing premises and facilities.

The following agencies were approached.

4.3.1 Barnstaple and District Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB had for some time been considering setting up an extension bureau at South Molton because of the numbers of clients from the area visiting other bureaux. Its existing bureaux were at Barnstaple and at Ilfracombe. On the other side of the study area there were bureaux at Tiverton and Crediton. From the earliest discussions of the project it was clear that a CAB would be central to the information and advice services at South Molton, together with the Volunteer Bureau and library. The NACAB information pack was purchased by Devon Library Services for the use of any person trained in its use, because it was felt to be an essential resource in terms of range of information and frequency of updating. Both the South Molton librarian and the project officer, having attended "basic training" courses, were thus able to make use of the files when necessary, in addition to the CAB workers subsequently appointed.

4.3.2 South Molton and District Volunteer Bureau

The work of the South Molton and District Volunteer Bureau in the general area of information and advice has already been mentioned (see Section 3.5). Again, it was clear from the start that the involvement of the bureau would be essential if the project was to be all-embracing. Discussions with the organiser, the late Mr Frank Foster, both before and after March 1980, led to the bureau moving from its existing office at 8 East Street to the Information Centre in May of that year.

4.3.3 Tourist information service

The introduction of a tourist information service was the end product of discussions with the town council (the Town Clerk having previously dealt with tourist enquiries), the county tourism office (which until 1978 had provided a mobile tourist information service in the central car park) and the West Country Tourist Board.

4.3.4 Small Firms Service

Business advice from the Small Firms Service had not been specifically identified at the start of the project, although it was hoped that one or more statutory services might be included. The introduction of this service followed a chance contact between the Small Firms Service regional manager and Owen Baker, then project head.

4.3.5 South Molton Archive

The Archive had long been associated with the library through a mutual interest in local history. In the early discussions of the project, a need for a more central meeting place, and for permanent document storage facilities, was identified. The Archive was thus invited to join the project, and took up the offer in August 1980.

So much for the agencies that actually became components of the Information Centre. Approaches were made to other organisations, which, for the reasons set out below, declined the offer of accommodation at the Centre.

North Devon District Council (Housing Advice and Environmental Health Services)	Decided these services were already adequately housed in the town
County council careers service	Had just renewed a lease on premises in the town
Barnstaple Job Centre	Insufficient need for its presence in the town/insufficient funds for extension
North Devon branch of Cruse (the organisation for helping widows, widowers, and their children)	Insufficient need for its presence in the town (help already given through existing organisations)
North Devon Marriage Guidance Council	Shortage of trained volunteers and training funds

These reactions show that, whilst organisations may be sympathetic to the idea of sharing premises (as all of the above were), there may be completely valid reasons for their declining to alter existing arrangements. The case of the Marriage Guidance Council also highlights another point. It might be worth while, where the need for a service is

sufficiently acute, to consider ways of assisting the provider agency — financially or otherwise — to participate in joint projects where there is some difficulty which the agency cannot surmount alone, i.e. funds should be set aside. (The Marriage Guidance Council and the Careers Service subsequently were able to reverse their decisions and began using the Centre in late 1981.)

4.4 Appointment of project officer

The choice of project officer was crucial to the success or failure of the project, and careful consideration was given to desired qualities and qualifications, and to the wording and placement of advertisements for the post. Although all references to the post in the project proposal were to a "community information librarian", this title reflected various preconceptions which were subsequently realised to be not necessarily in line with actual requirements.

The advertisement as placed, therefore, was for a "community information research worker" and it appeared in both national and local, general and specialist press. In the event, only two applications were received from librarians. Seven candidates were short-listed, and were interviewed in January 1980 by a panel comprising the County Librarian, the then project head, the Area Librarian for North Devon, and Jean Dunkley and John Usmar of the project committee.

Essentially, the requirements for the post were seen as:

— an understanding of the problems of information and advice provision in rural communities, and of possible ways of overcoming these;

— the ability to communicate with, and relate to, both client groups and a wide range of statutory and voluntary information and advice agencies;

— an understanding of the role of the library service in the provision of information;

— the ability to undertake systematic and careful research under the direction of the project committee;

— patience and perseverance in dealing with a range of problems and challenges;

— creativity to devise effective forms of publicity for the project;

— the ability to write interim and final reports.

The panel appointed David Venner, then Countryside Officer with the Rural Community Council of Hereford and Worcester, on the basis of both qualifications (1st class honours degree in resource management) and experience and local knowledge. Mr Venner took up post as project officer in March 1980.

4.5 Appointment of project consultant

It was felt desirable to appoint an external consultant to the project who would be able to contribute both a national perspective and relevant comparable experience — particularly important in the case of the South Molton project in view of its potential isolation from the mainstream of community information research and initiatives.

The British Library's nominee was Mrs Helene Curtis of the NCC, author of *The right to know* (NCC/NCSS, 1978) and with wide experience in the field of information and advice. The consultant made regular visits to the project, and her contribution ensured a wider applicability of the results than might otherwise have been the case.

Two "unofficial" consultants were also involved in the project, mainly by correspondence. They were Elaine Kempson, of the LA's Community Information Project; and Geoffrey Smith, County Librarian of Leicestershire and a member of the British Library Advisory Committee for Community Information Research. Particularly in the later stages of the project, their different perspectives and experience were valuable complements to those of the formal consultant.

4.6 Project timetable

To give the reader an overview of the complete process of the development of the Information Centre, the major events and activities are detailed below. Clearly, the list is not intended to form a "blueprint" for developing another Information Centre, although one might expect progress elsewhere broadly to follow the general pattern.

Section 6 deals with the development of the Centre in detail, and Section 8 suggests ways in which the experience gained could help others.

(Events of relevance to the project but not directly concerned with development are in parentheses.)

Background to the project

1974-78	Recognition by Devon and other library authorities of a need to identify information needs and policies in rural areas in the light of varying provision by former constituent authorities.

Year 1 (1978) Preparing the proposal

(early 1978)	Owen Baker, then Devon Library Services' Principal Assistant, Information Services, drafted outline project proposal.
May	Steering group formed to finalise proposal.
November	Devon County Council Amenities and Countryside Committee agreed to give "sympathetic consideration" to continue "if fulfilling public need" at the end of the experimental period.

Year 2 (1979) Obtaining local support

February	Meeting with local organisations — approval given.
May	Proposal submitted to British Library.
November	Approval received. Project committee formed. Proposal circulated to local organisations and other interested parties.
December	Post of project officer advertised.

Year 3 (1980) Survey and setting up

January	Project officer appointed to Devon Library Services.
March	Project officer commenced work. Phase I of project begun.

April	First meeting of local liaison group. Early publicity in press and on local radio.
May	Volunteer Bureau moved in. Roy Hutton (Community Services Librarian) succeeded Owen Baker as project head.
June	CAB opened.
July	Tourist information service started.
August	South Molton Archive began using a room at the Centre. Project Phase I completed.
July-September	First survey conducted. Request for return of questionnaires broadcast on local radio.
September	Small Firms Service monthly clinics started. First lunchtime discussion held. Posters first displayed in town and villages. Float entered in South Molton Carnival.
October	(MP for North Devon visited Information Centre.) Interim report submitted to British Library.
November	Marriage Guidance Council, careers service and Job Centre decided against using the Centre for the time being. Coffee morning held to "integrate" volunteers from different agencies.

Year 4 (1981) Consolidating and extending

January	(Library opening hours changed.) Temporary promotional display mounted in vacant shop window in the Square.
February	Broadsheet first published.
March	Village representative scheme started. Began to prepare case for funding Centre after February 1982.

April	Meeting with Volunteer Bureau to discuss its role. CAB opening hours extended. Tourist information point recognised by West Country Tourist Board.
May	Small Firms Service started weekly counselling. Meeting with British Library to discuss future funding.
May-July	(Acted as local ticket office for Yehudi Menuhin concert in South Molton Church.)
June	(County council elections — new local councillor elected.) New posters displayed in towns and villages.
July	Directional sign erected in centre of Square.
August	In telephone directory for first time. Librarian assumed responsibility for broadsheet and management of Centre.
September	(Mobile library routes changed.) Project Phase II completed. Project officer began writing report. Float entered in South Molton carnival. Application to British Library for extension of one year.
September-October	Final survey conducted.
October	(Mobile librarian retired.)
November	Marriage Guidance began "appointment only" sessions at the Centre.

Year 5 (1982) Reporting

January	Meeting of village representatives to review progress. Extension year approved by British Library (March 1982 — February 1983).
February	(Accommodation guide prepared by project officer with help of proprietors of accommodation.) End of Project Phase III — project officer submitted report.

4.7 Costs and sources of funding

Below are set out the major quantifiable costs of the project, and the sources of funding that have been drawn upon to meet them. Inevitably there have been some hidden costs which cannot be quantified. However, it is likely that in similar situations, equivalent costs will also be included in normal administrative budgets.

4.7.1 Research costs

Costs of the research project, covering professional staff costs and travel and subsistence, for 1980/81 and 1981/82 were entirely met by the British Library Research and Development Department to a total of £15,999.

Recurrent costs associated with the research, such as printing and stationery, were met from Devon Library Services' funds.

4.7.2 Setting-up costs

These were met by Devon Library Services. They were: telephone installation (£185) and purchase of the NACAB information pack (£300), a total of £485.

4.7.3 Running costs

For items 1 to 4 below, the annual cost has been calculated on the basis of a third share of the total bill for the whole building, this being the proportion of the Information Centre floor area to the library floor area as a whole. Items 5, 6, and 7 are all two-year totals.

	£	*Total (£)*
1. Rental	935.00 pa	1870.00
2. General and water rates	257.00 pa	514.00
3. Electricity	226.00 pa	452.00
4. Gas	110.00 pa	220.00
5. Telephones		508.28
6. Publicity		110.00
7. Postage		76.71
		3750.99

4.7.4 Special projects

In each of these small but important sub-projects of the main research project, great efforts were made before the projects were started to find ways of meeting the costs likely to be involved.

The sub-projects were

	£ *1980/81*	£ *1981/82*	£ *Total*
Village representatives	—	12	12
Broadsheet	30	255*	285
			297

* after March 1982, the cost rose from £17.50 to £40.00 for 3,000 copies

The sum of £12.00 for setting up the village representative scheme was met by a contribution from the Community Council of Devon. The costs of the broadsheet, of which an average of 3,000 copies were issued each month from February 1981, were met by sponsors, each monthly issue being sponsored by a local firm or organisation.

4.7.5 Future costs

No attempt is made here to estimate the annual costs of running the Information Centre. However, it is worth pointing out that many of the above costs are non-recurrent. Research costs — the major expenditure item over the two-year period — will be much smaller for 1982/83 and will probably disappear altogether thereafter. Setting-up costs obviously will not recur, unless substantial developments are initiated.

Final decisions on future sources of funding will be taken by the steering committee.

5 First Survey

Section 2 looked at needs in general terms and at the difficulties involved in defining them. The problem is not just *who* to ask, but *how many*? The resources of the project did not permit a comprehensive house-to-house survey, and in any case door-step interviewing may not be the best method of ascertaining needs because of the differing perceptions of interviewer and interviewee.

The method chosen, therefore, was a combination of interviews with information providers, and 2,000 questionnaires distributed to the public at large. This gave the most comprehensive coverage possible with limited manpower, i.e. the project officer plus a small amount of voluntary help (three volunteer receptionists, taken on for the tourist season, helped the project officer with analysis work). Attempts to secure the assistance of students for interviewing the public were unsuccessful owing to the unavoidable timing of the survey during the long vacation at North Devon College.

5.1 Interviews

Professional workers who are also informal information providers were interviewed by the project officer, and included social workers, health visitors, clergy and teachers. Others contacted included representatives of parish councils, Women's Institutes, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, Age Concern, and fund-raising organisations such as Rotary, Lions and Round Table.

A variety of viewpoints emerged, reflecting the range of interests involved. Some stressed the needs of a particular age group such as the elderly or the young; others focussed more on subject areas such as marital difficulties, low incomes or housing. One problem identified in most of the responses was that of accessibility, particularly in the case of people in the more rural areas because they were isolated from information and advice points by immobility, lack of transport, or simply through not knowing how to contact them. Many people, especially those new to the area, lacked close family and friends to assist them to reach the available sources of help. Whilst providing no statistical evidence of need, these interviews suggested that the project's main emphasis should perhaps be on improving the communication channels between those

needing information and advice and the sources of such help, rather than on setting up yet another organisation.

5.2 The questionnaire survey

This was designed with a view to obtaining a high response rate, whilst at the same time obtaining as much information as possible about people's information needs, how they went about satisfying them, and certain other details, e.g. age, occupation, library use and so on. In practice, it is not possible to maximise both these demands, since in some respects they conflict. Simplifying the form and content of the questionnaire to ease the task of completing it may reduce its usefulness; on the other hand, making it too comprehensive may render it incomprehensible. A balance must be aimed at between usefulness and response. The questionnaire used (see Appendix 4) contained just 20 questions, and was folded into a leaflet to give an attractive but unpretentious image.

Of the total of 2,000 questionnaires, about one-third were left in newsagents and cafes in South Molton and in post offices in the villages. Another third were distributed via the library and mobile library. Approximately 75 were distributed door-to-door around a site of mobile homes on the edge of South Molton. The remainder were given to selected organisers of groups, e.g. Women's Institute secretaries, teachers, playgroup leaders, and day centre wardens, with the request that they circulate the questionnaires among their members and then collect and return them to the project officer. Some groups, especially the Women's Institutes, took up the project officer's offer to explain the purpose of the survey. The respective response rates reflect the varying success achieved by these different methods of distribution.

	Distributed	*Returned*	*% Response*
Cafes and shops	*c* 650	15	2.5
Library/mobile library	*c* 650	107	16.5
House to house (mobile homes)	75	5	6.5
Organisations	*c* 650	85	13.0
Total	*c* 2000	212	11.0

The most successful method of distribution, in terms of response achieved, was via the library and the mobile library, where people were

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encouraged to take a questionnaire (in some cases by putting the leaflet into the library books) and asked to return it when they next changed their books. The least successful method was distribution in shops and cafes. As often as not, the questionnaire would not be noticed. Even if somebody did pick one up, the chances of their remembering to return it — and to a different place (the library) — were rather slim. Clearly, the more direct involvement in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, the greater the response.

5.3 Results

The full results of the survey are given in Appendix 5.

Seventy per cent of the respondents were female (although quite a number indicated that they were completing the questionnaire on behalf of their husbands). The different age groups were fairly well represented although there was an excessive bias towards the older age group. Almost equal numbers of "natives" and "newcomers" to the area responded. Approximately 75% of the total lived outside South Molton, with a fairly even spread across the rural district.

An information need during the previous 12 months was referred to by 57.5% of respondents. The answers show that "money matters" and "housing" were the main issues concerning respondents (mentioned by 33 and 21 people respectively out of 122 who answered these questions). Other subjects mentioned were education (14), hobbies and recreation (10), consumer matters (nine), legal matters (nine), social security and employment (seven), local information (six), and transport (four).

The most popular sources of information and advice were family and neighbours (mentioned by 21 respondents), followed by the library (18), solicitor (18), council offices (14), councillors (11), and accountant (11).

Questions on library use revealed that just over 90% of respondents used a library or mobile library either frequently or occasionally. Forty-eight per cent used South Molton library — 31% frequently — whilst 58% used the mobile library based at South Molton — 52% frequently. Fourteen per cent used another branch library (sometimes in addition to South Molton) and 6% used another mobile library. These figures represent a considerable bias towards library users (hardly surprising since the highest response rate was obtained in the library); of the total study area population, approximately 25% use South Molton library and 10% the mobile library. So despite considerable efforts to obtain the views of a

cross-section of the population, the fact remains a major problem to be tackled by library-based information projects.

Partly to discover the most suitable newspapers for use in connection with publicising the Information Centre, respondents were asked to list the local newspapers and parish magazines which they read. Only 11% replied that they read none. Sixty-one per cent read the *North Devon Journal-Herald*, a regional paper, 12% the *South Molton Gazette*, and less than 5% each of the four other weekly or daily local papers. Forty-seven per cent read one of the parish magazines.

6 The Information Centre

6.1 Setting up the Information Centre

6.1.1 Premises

The appearance and layout of the premises are illustrated in Figure 1. The three rooms and connecting reception area on the first floor were vacated by the Divisional Surveyor in June 1978. Devon Library Services took over the lease of these rooms, and by March 1980 they had been redecorated and equipped with surplus office furniture from the previous occupant. A small downstairs room was available for interviewing clients who were unable to climb the stairs.

A temporary telephone was installed in March 1980. This was subsequently replaced by a Keymaster 2 x 10 system. Six of the maximum 10 stations were used, allowing calls to be made, received and transferred in each of the three rooms as well as the reception area, library and library office. The system also permits internal communication. Costs of installation, rental and calls made by all agencies using the system have been met by Devon Library Services.

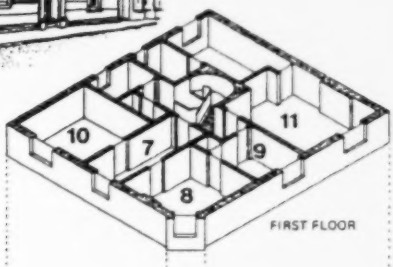
Leaflet racks for the CAB stock were supplied by Devon Library Services, and those for tourist information by the West Country Tourist Board. The Volunteer Bureau contributed its own display rack and other items of furniture. A free-standing board indicating which agencies were open at any one time was specially made by one of the Bureau's "handymen", and positioned at the foot of the stairs. Full details of opening hours and telephone numbers for each agency were also displayed beside the door to the street.

6.1.2 Devon Library Services

South Molton library. As the library was both the basis, and one of the constituents, of the Information Centre, its resources and services are described below in some detail.

The branch and mobile libraries provide a stock of adult and children's books for loan, housebound readers being served by friends, neighbours and volunteers from the Volunteer Bureau. Children's extension activities include a good reader's circle and a summer game and storytime during

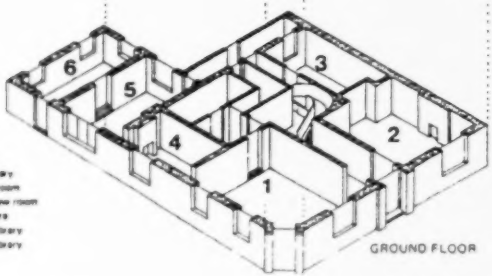
SOUTH MOLTON COMMUNITY
INFORMATION CENTRE



FIRST FLOOR

First Floor

7. Reception area
8. Office (i)
9. Interview room
10. Office (ii)
11. Private tenant

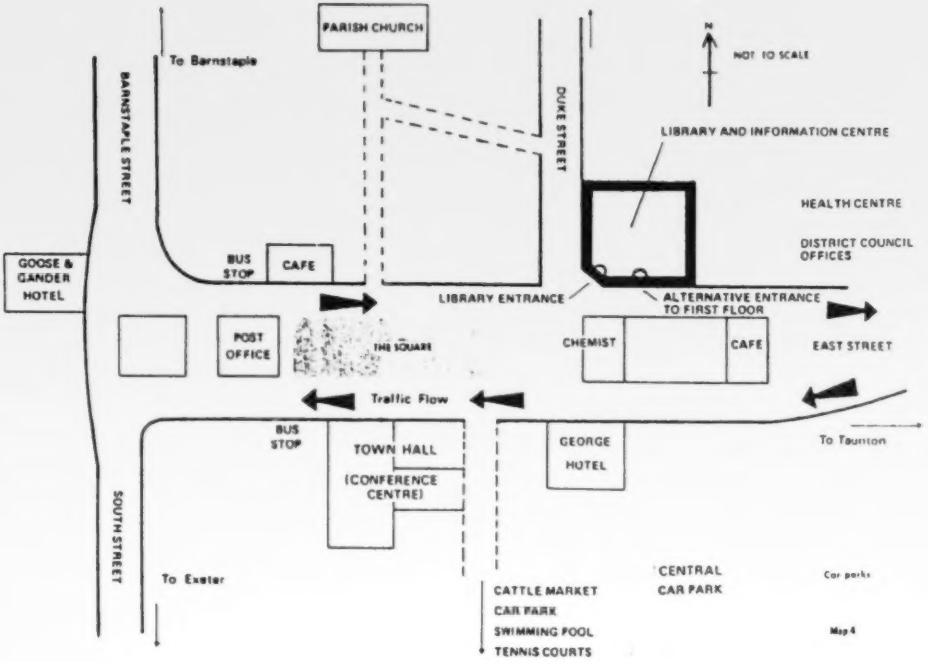


GROUND FLOOR

Ground Floor

1. Lending Library
2. Office/workroom
3. Small interview room and book store
4. Children's Library
5. Reference Library
6. Book store

fig 1


PARISH CHURCH
To Barnstaple
BARNSTAPLE STREET
DUKE STREET
N
NOT TO SCALE
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE
HEALTH CENTRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES
GOOSE & GANDER HOTEL
BUS STOP
CAFE
LIBRARY ENTRANCE
ALTERNATIVE ENTRANCE TO FIRST FLOOR
POST OFFICE
THE SQUARE
CHEMIST
CAFE
EAST STREET
Traffic Flow
BUS STOP
TOWN HALL
(CONFERENCE CENTRE)
GEORGE HOTEL
To Taunton
SOUTH STREET
To Exeter
CENTRAL CAR PARK
Car parks
CATTLE MARKET CAR PARK
SWIMMING POOL
TENNIS COURTS
Map 4

the summer holidays. South Molton playgroup visits the library to change books.

Reference and information services are based on a small general reference collection, local history files, and a card index of local information. Newspapers and magazines (many donated) are also available in the reference library. Local events are recorded in a diary on display by the issue desk along with posters advertising current attractions. A notice-board is available for local societies wishing to advertise their activities.

The branch supplies a remote home on the edge of Exmoor and the mobile a sheltered home for handicapped young people. A collection of adult literacy material is housed in the reference library.

Both the branch and mobile libraries act as agents for the Talking Book Service for the Blind.

Area and other back-up services. The area system in Devon enables back-up service, except certain specialised functions detailed later, to be not too far away, although it must be noted that North Area, of which South Molton and its hinterland form part, is more than 50 miles across.

Book selection and stock editing are mainly the responsibility of the area staff at Barnstaple, as is the provision of services to schools and to the handicapped and elderly, although local staff at South Molton maintain close links with these users. The area library also acts as a clearing house for readers' requests, using the resources of other libraries in the system, and, via the county clearing house, the South Western Regional Library Bureau and British Library. Administration, covering financial, personnel and transport matters, as well as that connected with the specialist services, is area-based.

Unanswered information enquiries are referred to the small area reference library at Barnstaple, which will utilise more specialised sources, such as the major reference collections at Exeter and Plymouth, if necessary.

In two subject fields, the back-up is from the main county resource — drama, where the major play set collection is at Exeter, and music, where Plymouth holds the county collection. As far as local history is concerned, the Westcountry Studies Library and Devon Record Office at Exeter have the definitive material for detailed local studies but there is a considerable amount of information held locally in the areas, and branch libraries have collections of varying size on their own localities.

The county maintains a bindery at Plymouth which handles over 100,000 volumes a year.

Changes in reference provision. One of the several connected rooms which comprise the library premises at South Molton has always been used as a reference/homework room with a collection of some 450 books including standard works in major subjects and quick reference texts such as encyclopaedias, ***Whitaker's Almanack*** and official county council publications. The ***Transactions*** of both Devon and Somerset local history societies are held. This collection, together with the lending stock (which included a strong local studies section), comprised a substantial information resource. The area reference library at Barnstaple and the two major county reference resources at Exeter and Plymouth provided back-up.

When the project was mooted, it was apparent that this traditional collection at South Molton, apart from isolated items such as ***Charities Digest***, ***Whitaker's Almanack***, and ***Family law***, would bear little relation to the instant resource which would be required in the community information field — a resource geared to the "survival" needs of the citizen in this complex society. Accordingly, a range of titles such as ***Citizens' handbook***, ***You and your rights***, ***Housing rights handbook***, ***Magistrate's court guide***, ***Source book for the disabled***, ***Annual abstract of statistics***, the Consumer's Association ***Buyers right***, some ephemera, a few more specialised law books like ***Law for farmers***, and a substantial amount of tourist information material, were introduced. Throughout the project period, further relevant titles were selected by the project officer, the CAB, Volunteer Bureau organisers, and the area reference librarian, from the NACAB and "Grass roots" booklists, and from publishers' catalogues.

6.1.3 Local liaison groups

An early priority in the project officer's work was to bring together the agencies which had agreed to join the project in the form of a liaison committee. The project proposal had identified the establishment of "a committee of service providers" as one of the "problem areas" to be explored by the project. Representatives of the CAB, Volunteer Bureau, Archive and library were accordingly brought together for the first time at the end of April 1980. (The Small Firms Service had not been contacted at this stage, and the tourist information service, being planned as an "in house" operation, was not separately represented.)

At the first meeting, which was kept as informal as possible (although minutes were taken), matters discussed included the purpose of the local

liaison group (as it came to be designated) and its relationship to the project committee. The group's purpose was agreed as follows: to bring together the agencies working in the Centre, and to discuss the day-to-day running of the service. Its relationship with the project committee changed during the course of the project: initially, the group advised the project committee on local matters, with the project committee dealing with the overall direction of the project, and liaising with the British Library.

Other matters considered at early meetings of the group included outstanding decoration and furnishing of the premises; reception arrangements and use of rooms; telephones; acquisition of reference material; and preliminary plans for the survey of information needs.

At this early stage, a need was identified by the group for each set of office volunteers (CAB and Volunteer Bureau) and library staff to be briefed on the work of the other agencies at the Centre, and on that of other organisations involved in information and advice. This was achieved by inviting representatives from all relevant agencies to informal lunchtime discussions held every other month, alternating with meetings of the local liaison group. The meetings focussed on the work of each agency in turn through brief statements by the respective organisers, followed by discussion. For a similar purpose, a coffee morning was arranged for Volunteer Bureau helpers not involved in the office duties. Later meetings of the local liaison group were attended by representatives of the town council, district council and Area Committee of Parish Councils. The two local groups of Women's Institutes were also invited but did not send representatives, preferring to follow progress by receiving minutes of meetings.

6.1.4 The Volunteer Bureau

This was the first agency (excluding the library itself) to open at the Information Centre. This took place on 7 May 1980. Initially, the Bureau's hours were from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon daily (at its previous office location the Bureau had opened on Tuesdays and Thursdays between the same times). During these hours, the Bureau had exclusive use of one room leading off to the right from the reception area.

The office (for which much of the furniture and equipment was supplied by the Bureau) was manned by the then organiser or by one of a team of volunteers. As it already had an established telephone number, the Bureau decided not to change over to one of the Keymaster numbers but to retain its own system, which included an answering machine giving

alternative numbers for out-of-hours calls. One effect of the move was a reduction in personal visits by members of the public, who had previously "dropped in" to the ground floor premises which had a "shop window" overlooking the street near the health centre. Telephone calls were not affected, but the decrease in visits led to concern about the use being made of the Bureau and to a subsequent review of its work, particularly in view of the advisory work developed by the CAB.

6.1.5 Citizens Advice Bureau

The next agency to use the rooms was the CAB. Following the training of three volunteers in April 1980, arrangements were made for the opening of the extension bureau at South Molton, which took place on 9 June with a ceremony involving the Town Mayor, County Councillor, library staff and other local representatives. Invitations were accepted by the local press and Westward Television. The resulting coverage provided valuable early publicity. The hours of the CAB were from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon on Mondays and 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Thursdays. Thursday is market day in South Molton, bringing large numbers of country people into town. Monday was chosen largely because it was felt that people might wish to bring problems to the CAB having discussed or thought about them over the weekend. Subsequent experience tended to disprove this theory — Monday was often the quietest day of the week when the Bureau later opened daily.

During the above hours, the Bureau had exclusive use of the two inter-connecting rooms to the left of the reception area. This arrangement is an essential requirement of the service, to ensure confidentiality of an interview when a second client arrives. Later, the hours were extended to every morning, Thursdays 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. as before, and to Friday evenings.

6.1.6 Information resources

The local information section was built up by the CAB workers with the help of the library and the Volunteer Bureau, the staff of which had each previously developed their own card indexes. The library card index contained details of welfare, social and recreational organisations, and was used to answer enquiries from the public. The Volunteer Bureau system, containing details of its professional and voluntary contacts, was exclusively for internal use.

Subsequently, an attempt was made to bring together all three local information systems, but this proved impossible for practical and tactical

reasons; practically, because of the location of two of the agencies on the first floor and the library on the ground floor, and because of the different opening hours; tactically, because in the early days of their joint occupation of the Information Centre, the CAB and Volunteer Bureau were naturally establishing boundaries for their respective services, and this tended to pre-empt the establishment of a joint system for storing local information. Failing this, the next objective was to ensure that the information contained in each system was consistent, and that each agency informed the others of any alterations. This was initially done by circulating three loose-leaf folders approximately once a week. Delays in circulation from one to another meant, however, that an agency might be without a folder when a new piece of information came to hand. The system was therefore replaced by slips of paper completed in triplicate. Again, this was not entirely satisfactory as the information flow tended to be largely one-way, from the library to the other agencies.

6.1.7 Tourist information

The tourist information service was started on 4 July 1980. Leaflets and guides to various resorts (local and national) were assembled from those sent to the library service and from the County Tourism Office's stock of locally produced publications. The West Country Tourist Board supplied leaflet racks and signs, the former being positioned by a desk in the reception area. The service was manned in the first season by three specially recruited volunteers working for two hours at a time during the busiest hours, and at other times by CAB and Volunteer Bureau workers in conjunction with their other duties, and by the project officer. After-hours enquiries (later than 5.30 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturday mornings) were dealt with by staff in the library.

An accommodation list was drawn up from information compiled by the librarian and this was expanded as a result of press coverage of the launch of the service, which asked proprietors of local accommodation to send in details.

The level of service was chosen after careful consideration of the alternatives. A fully developed tourist information centre (a designation by the West Country Tourist Board) would probably have swamped the other agencies in the Centre during the first crucial months in the summer of 1980, and it is arguable whether the full service would have been justifiable given the volume of tourist business in the area. On the other hand, the minimal service previously offered in the library (a limited range of mainly local leaflets in the reference library together with the accommodation list at the library counter) was insufficient to meet the demand.

6.1.8 South Molton Archive

The next agency to become involved was the South Molton Archive, in August 1980. As mentioned earlier, links between the Archive and the library were already strong. The group had, until 1980, met at South Molton Community College on the edge of the town and it was keen to have a more central location, both for meetings and for storing and examining the growing number of documents in its collection. Unlike the other organisations using the Centre, the Archive did not offer a direct information or advice service to the public (apart from answering local and family history enquiries) and therefore was not tied down to specific hours of opening. The documents were accommodated in the right-hand room used each morning by the Volunteer Bureau. Evening meetings and afternoon visits by the Secretary meant that there were no problems of overlapping use.

6.1.9 Small Firms Service

In September 1980, the Small Firms Service began its monthly information days. Initially held on the second Wednesday of each month, they were subsequently changed to the fourth Wednesday to fit in with other visits to the West Country. At this time, the CAB used the left-hand rooms on Mondays and Thursdays, and so the Small Firms Service had exclusive use of these rooms when it visited. The service was provided by an information officer who travelled from the Bristol office each month, and by a business counsellor from Taunton. Because of the distances involved in travelling to meetings, it was not practicable for the Service to be represented on the local liaison group. However, it was kept informed of developments by the project officer, and closer liaison with other agencies became possible when the Small Firms Service began weekly counselling on Fridays (by appointment only) in May 1981.

6.2 Consolidating and extending

6.2.1 The first eight months' experience

Numbers of enquiries during the period from the opening of the first agency in May through to December 1980, are as follows:

(1980)	*Volunteer Bureau*	*CAB*	*Tourist info. service*	*Small Firms Service*	*Total*
May	7	—	—	—	7
June	6	19	—	—	25
July	15	35	24	—	74
August	4	21	68	—	93
September	10	35	27	3	75
October	15	27	4	3	49
November	19	42	2	3	66
December	11	18	2	—	31
Total	87	197	127	9	420

Note: tourist enquiries and, to a lesser extent, enquiries to the other agencies, can be expected to show seasonal variation.

Library enquiries, including both subject requests and reference queries, averaged about 100 per month during this period. The former category includes requests for information on, for example, welding, or aircraft of the First World War, and is passed on to the North Area library at Barnstaple when the required book is not in stock. The latter category includes enquiries concerned with, for example, legal and consumer matters, local information, and CAB opening times. Appendix 6 contains an analysis of the number and type of enquiries received during a period of one month during March and April 1980.

It can be seen that the Information Centre had not made a large impact in quantitative terms by the end of 1980. This is perhaps to be expected — anything new in a rural area takes a long time to become established. However, the purely statistical assessment given above masks the qualitative impact of each service. For example, the August figures of 68 tourist enquiries, compared with 21 CAB cases and four Volunteer Bureau tasks do not convey the depth of involvement or the amount of time put in by the last two agencies relative to the first. Also, the value of availability of these agencies for each client with a pressing problem is not altered by the fact that there are only 20 others being helped that month, rather than 200 or 2,000.

6.2.2 Publicity

A most important task at this stage was to ensure that people knew where and when help was available. This required widespread publicity,

repeated in various forms to ensure that the whole community was covered. After this had been achieved, there was still what might be called the "credibility gap" — the time it took for the public, once they knew about the new venture, to accept it as "theirs", to have confidence in the people involved, and faith in the services offered. Only then could the number of enquiries be expected to reach anything like a level reflecting the real demand for information and advice. It took probably another year before this level was reached.

Early on in the project's life, the local press and radio were used to publicise its aims and intentions, backed up by leaflets distributed through various outlets such as parish magazines, the mobile library, and even from a float entered in the local carnival. During the period from May to September, when the agencies were moving into the Centre, and when it was not known how many more would eventually comprise the Centre, conventional forms of publicity such as posters, could not be used — they would have required amendment as soon as they had been printed. However, towards the end of September, with five agencies regularly using the premises, a composite poster advertising the various opening hours was printed and displayed in post offices, on church, chapel and parish council notice boards, and in several locations in South Molton itself. There was no discernible increase in use of the agencies in the following month or so, indicating that posters are perhaps not so effective as sometimes thought. The second survey (see Section 7) showed that most clients interviewed had heard of the Centre through friends or through seeing the window display overlooking the Square. No-one mentioned posters. However, posters may still have been a useful way of reinforcing the initial contact with the Centre. It will be seen that much effort was put into ensuring that people in the rural district were informed about the Centre, as well as the concentration of population in the town itself.

The individual agencies had publicised their own arrival at the centre: the Volunteer Bureau with posters and car stickers; the CAB by means of newspaper adverts and leaflets in parish magazines; and the Small Firms Service by means of a newspaper article and adverts. This division of responsibility for publicity reflects a general policy: individual agencies advertised their own services, and the project advertised the Information Centre as a whole. This worked very well in practice, since it gave each agency the scope to promote itself as an autonomous, independent body, whilst the project publicity for the combination of services was necessary to convey the corporate image.

The surveys conducted in 1980 and 1981 were also useful forms of publicity. The leaflets themselves advertised the Centre, and newspaper articles coinciding with the launch of each survey added to the coverage.

6.2.3 Broadsheet

From February 1981, a monthly broadsheet entitled *News from the South Molton Information Centre* was produced by the project officer with the help of the librarian. A sample issue is included in Appendix 7. Its purpose was threefold: first, to promote the Centre and its constituent agencies; secondly, to convey certain items of information — latest benefit rates, new schemes of help, etc.; and thirdly, to publish the local events diary kept at the library counter. (During the previous year, a local printer had produced a *North Devon Diary* every other month. This was aimed at tourists and was not continued beyond the end of the 1980 season.)

Production of the broadsheet was planned by the project committee, the early discussions focussing on size, colour, frequency and style. A standard format was adopted, but a different colour was used each month to distinguish each new issue. The front cover was allocated to each agency in turn to describe its role. (Later this facility was extended to agencies outside the centre.) The inside pages contained the local events diary and a news column (new benefit rates and requests for volunteers, etc.), and a reproduction of the project poster occupied the back page. Subsequently, the latter was reduced to half page to allow space for more news items.

Sponsors, mainly local businesses, were found by the project officer to cover the cost of each issue, and the broadsheet was printed by the county council printing unit with an initial run of 2,000 copies. In the summer months this was increased to 4,000, then dropped to 3,000 and retained at that level for the rest of the year. Preparation of the broadsheet and its circulation around the town and villages were initially carried out by the project officer. From the September 1981 issue, these tasks became the responsibility of the librarian, to free the project officer for report writing.

The broadsheet has without doubt been one of the successes of the project. The diary of local events proved to be extremely popular — both with the organisers of events who regularly informed the Centre of their future programmes, and with the general public. Each entry represented a new contact with an individual or organisation, and the fact that the broadsheet was a regular, monthly production meant that the project was continually in the public eye. Its value to the Centre lay in the

opportunities it presented for conveying hard information about the user agencies and for generally promoting the Centre. Feedback from the various items included in the news column added to its communication value.

6.2.4 Extension of services

During 1981, a number of changes took place, in opening hours and in the work of the agencies in the Centre.

From April, the **CAB** opened on weekday mornings from 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., on Thursdays until 3.00 p.m., and on Friday evenings, initially from 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., but, after a three-month trial period when few clients visited, from 6.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. Between July and December, an average of 345 clients attended these sessions each week. This soon declined with the arrival of wintry weather, and the session was discontinued for the remainder of the winter.

The number of enquiries overall increased noticeably after these changes. Clients were now able to come along knowing that there would be someone at the CAB every morning — rather than having to stop and think, or find out on which day it was open. One of the new workers recruited prior to the extension of opening hours had a particular interest in the needs of clients in relation to welfare rights and employment disputes. Thus the Bureau's service was extended to include help for clients involved in supplementary benefit appeals, industrial tribunals, etc. He very quickly found that there was plenty of demand for the specialist help which he offered.

The **Small Firms Service** continued its information service on the fourth Wednesday of each month, but from 1 May offered counselling, by appointment, for more detailed problems. Clients made arrangements for attending the Information Centre at either 9.30 a.m., 11.30 a.m. or 2.15 p.m., by telephoning the Small Firms Service centre at Bristol. To begin with, this service was offered every Friday, but the level of demand made fortnightly visits more practicable, especially for one of the two counsellors, who travelled from Taunton (the other came from near Crediton).

The **Volunteer Bureau**, having lost its advisory cases to the CAB, and having accepted that this was the better arrangement, found that most of its work involved transporting people, at considerable cost to itself and to its volunteers. At the Bureau's annual general meeting in May 1981, a decision was made to look closely at the various methods available to

meet this demand more effectively; the result was a volunteer car service, in which drivers' petrol costs were reimbursed, clients were charged at a lower rate, and the deficit was made up from local authority grants and the Bureau's own fund-raising activities. Over 100 journeys in the first four months testify to the need for this service. The usual destinations were hospitals and health centres, with occasional shopping and other essential trips where the client could not use public transport. Care was taken to ensure that the viability of local bus services was not affected.

Tourist information had initially been organised in a fairly low-key manner to avoid swamping the other agencies, especially in the holiday periods. For the 1981 season it was felt that some expansion could be accommodated without causing conflict. The Centre therefore became a "tourist information point" — an official designation of the West Country Tourist Board. With the help of the Board, a more comprehensive stock of leaflets and guides was established. The list of holiday accommodation in the area was brought up to date through a request for information in the broadsheet. Volunteers to man the desk were recruited through the Volunteer Bureau, the library, and the broadsheet. At the end of the season, discussions were started with local proprietors of bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation, with a view to producing a printed accommodation guide for 1982. This was compiled by the project officer with the help of a group of the proprietors, and was circulated locally, and nationally through libraries and tourist information centres, in February 1982.

Village representatives. Following the introduction of the broadsheet, a further step was taken to ensure that the Information Centre services were known and available to the inhabitants of the rural area. Parish councils, Women's Institutes and the clergy were invited to nominate a member of their community to act as a village representative. These were to be people who were well known, approachable (both geographically and in terms of their personality) and willing to help promote the Centre and to signpost enquiries to the appropriate agency. In many cases, the three organisations asked for nominees and agreed on one person before submitting the name. In others, only one organisation chose to put a name forward, and so on no occasion did the Information Centre have to make a selection between two or three candidates.

This type of role was chosen, rather than a more involved advisory role adopted by some other schemes, after careful consideration by the project committee. It was felt that the latter role could possibly overlap with the CAB's work, unnecessarily so, as the Bureau could be contacted by telephone if a visit was not possible. On the other hand, given the necessary

training and back-up, advisory representatives could actively promote and complement the CAB service. However, it was agreed that this form of development would have been premature at that time. The 12 representatives therefore adopted a signposting function, and distribution of the broadsheet became their major activity.

A meeting of village representatives in January 1982 confirmed that the chosen role was workable. Representatives felt that their respective communities knew of their existence and purpose through their involvement in broadsheet distribution. They expressed one requirement which had not been met — a directory of local organisations and essential services to help them deal with enquiries. It is hoped that this will be undertaken by library staff in 1982 with representatives contributing information about their own parishes to supplement district and South Molton information compiled centrally.

New organisations. After earlier, unsuccessful attempts at including marriage guidance counselling in the Centre's services, the project was pleased to offer space to the Marriage Guidance Council for occasional interviews from mid-November. The travelling and training fund difficulties had eased sufficiently to justify a counsellor's journey from Barnstaple to South Molton. By the end of 1981, three interviews had been conducted. At about the same time, further discussions with the careers service resulted in a decision that they would also use the Information Centre for interviews — again on an irregular basis, depending on demand. As yet (February 1982) no interviews have been held.

Other new activities associated with the Centre in 1981 were fortnightly evening meetings of the South Molton Women's Group, starting at the end of September; a day-time clinic held on 2 November by the Devon Association for the Blind; and a day conference of the Devon and Cornwall Association of Assistant Librarians, held on 12 November. An event of a different kind with which the centre was associated was a concert given by Yehudi Menuhin in South Molton church to celebrate the silver jubilee of South West Arts. The Centre acted as the local booking office and sold over 200 tickets. The value of this exercise to the project was the fact that it brought into the Centre a large number of people who otherwise would not have had contact; more people to tell their friends and neighbours about the Centre. It was also beneficial to be seen to be involved in such a prestigious local event.

6.2.5 Use of the Centre during 1981

The numbers of enquiries to each agency are set out overleaf:

	Volunteer Bureau	*CAB*	*Tourist info.*	*Small Firms Service*	*Total (1981)*	*Total (1980)*
January	11	34	3	6	54	
February	10	31	2	1	44	
March	12	31	3	0	46	
April	6	42	14	0	62	
May	17	48	19	11 **	95	7
June	27 *	50	39	4	120	25
July	34	66	85	5	190	74
August	42	60	137	1	240	93
September	48	60	55	14	177	75
October	21	66	6	7	100	49
November	13	61	2	6	82	66
December	14	33	2	3	52	31
1981 Total	255	582	367	58	1262	
1980 Total	87 May -Dec	197 June -Dec	127 July -Dec	9 Sep -Dec		420
1980/81	342	779	494	67		1682

* Start of volunteer car scheme
** Start of weekly counselling

When compared with the use of the various services in the first eight months of the project, the 1981 figures clearly demonstrate an all-round increase in the use of the Centre. This can largely be attributed to the promotional activities described above, and to the further lapse of time during which the public's acceptance of, and confidence in, the Centre had developed.

The percentage increases in each service, for the corresponding periods in each year during which the services operated are as follows — Volunteer Bureau (May — December) +148%; CAB (June — December) +106%; tourist information (July — December) +125%; Small Firms Service (September — December) +233%.

Library subject requests increased by 17% (and those on the mobile library by 18.5%) but it is impossible to say whether or not this has any connection with the increasing use of the other agencies, and in any case, changed opening hours and mobile library routes would invalidate direct comparison. Reference enquiries were still averaging about 80 per month, making an overall monthly average of 125.

7 Second Survey

The second questionnaire survey was conducted in September 1981, following as closely as possible the format and distribution methods of the first. In addition, local organisations were invited to submit their views, and clients using the various agencies were interviewed.

7.1 Questionnaire to individuals

Of the 125 people who answered the questionnaire (a response rate of 8%) one-fifth had used the Centre in some way. Several commented on the great advantage of having these services available locally, and having them all in one place.

A total of 52 people answered both the June 1980 questionnaire and the second one, but, of these, only 37 pairs of replies could be matched up, the others having chosen not to identify themselves on one or both questionnaires. Of these 37, 18 respondents to the first questionnaire referred to information or advice needed in the previous 12 months, and 14 to the source of help; 11 referred to a need in the second survey, and all of these gave the source of help. Within this last group, nine people were helped by one of the Information Centre agencies (four by the CAB, two by the Volunteer Bureau, two by the library, and one by the tourist information service). The other two went to other agencies in town: one to the health centre, one to the Lions Club.

The difference made by the Information Centre to these same nine people was summed up by eight of them (albeit with varying wording) as being a beneficial one owing to the fact that help was more readily available. The other replied that "it remains to be seen" — the enquiry had yet to be fully answered. Other comments, from those not recording any information/advice needs, included the following: "not needed so far, but a good idea, with everything in one place", and "would have been useful when we first moved into the area".

7.2 Questionnaire to organisations

The 16 organisations which responded (out of 45 circulated) included a cross-section of the town's voluntary and official bodies, and also some of

the parish councils and parish meetings in the rural area. In most of them, the whole membership had heard of the Information Centre, and an average of 10% had used one or more of the services. About half the organisations had contributed in some way (e.g. by providing volunteers) and about two-thirds had benefitted (e.g. from access to leaflets or publicity). Three-quarters had used the local events diary and all thought that it was worth continuing.

7.3 Interviews with clients

It had been decided that it would be preferable for each client to be asked about the Centre by the worker concerned — at the end of the normal interview — rather than by someone else, such as the project officer. It was felt that this method would give the best results by obtaining the views of clients there and then, when they would already be thinking about the subject. Workers in each agency were asked to attempt interviews with every other client over a period of one month (mid-September to mid-October 1981). In practice, this proved impossible to achieve, for various reasons. Where clients telephoned for advice, it was difficult — and costly for the client — to follow the conversation with a long list of questions. With visiting clients, a complicated case again made further questions undesirable from the points of view of both worker and client. The workers sometimes were too fully occupied to contemplate adding further to their workload. On other occasions, the atmosphere may not have been conducive to interviewing, for example when other people were within earshot. This applied particularly to the library. As a consequence, only 15 interviews were conducted successfully. However, these did throw up useful information about various aspects of the Centre and its usefulness, the effectiveness of publicity, and so on.

Of the 15 clients, six were contacting the Centre for the first time. Of the nine repeat visits, two were enquiring about the same problem. Five had previously been helped by a different agency within the Centre.

Clients had heard of the Centre from various sources, the most common one being a friend, followed by the sign in the first floor window overlooking the Square. Only one had asked someone else (at work) about their problem, indicating that the Centre is seen as a place to go to first of all with a problem, i.e. as a generalist rather than a specialist source of help. Most clients had come to the Centre on foot, and most whilst shopping in town (the majority were female). Ten of the 15 said that they would have had to go into Barnstaple for help if the Information Centre had not existed in South Molton.

Only four were frequent library users. Eight used neither the branch nor the mobile library. Ten preferred to take their problems to a voluntary agency. When asked whether the help they had received had been useful, 10 people said it had been completely satisfactory and five partially satisfactory. None had found the help unsatisfactory. Reasons given for complete satisfaction included: "everyone was very helpful", and "a quick response". Clients were asked if they felt that a need existed for other services. Their responses were: Job Centre, six; careers advice, four; marriage guidance, two; and Cruse (help for the widowed), two. Although these numbers are very small, they indicate some interest in these specialist agencies, two of which subsequently used the Information Centre for interviewing (careers service and Marriage Guidance Council).

The opening hours were felt to be convenient by all but one (preferring lunchtime opening), and the location of the Centre at the library was similarly favoured.

The survey as a whole provided many useful pointers and suggestions for the future development of the Centre. It cannot, of course, be used on its own as a yardstick against which to measure the success of the project; it was not designed in this way. But there is nothing, amongst the replies to the different parts of the survey, to suggest that any major changes should be implemented. The successful ingredients seem to be the generalist nature of most of the services, combined with specialist help in certain areas such as business advice. It may be necessary at some future date (after a minimum of two years) to undertake a further survey or consultation to ensure that the centre remains sensitive to the needs of the community.

8 Experience of the South Molton Project

The South Molton project has been solely concerned with an Information Centre based at a library, comprising a range of services offered by autonomous agencies. Consequently, this is the only arrangement with which this section can be concerned. Alternative arrangements that need to be examined elsewhere include:

(i) a library-run service (i.e. involving no other agency);

(ii) a library-dominated service;

(iii) a range of services based away from a library.

The advantages and disadvantages of the South Molton experience can be viewed in various ways. Perhaps the most important are the following.

8.1 What has Devon Library Services gained from the exercise?

The authority has learned that independent agencies can and will co-operate on library premises, given the sort of encouragement and support outlined in this report. There is inevitably a certain amount of difficulty at the outset, as each agency establishes its "territory", and personality conflicts will add to the problems.

The benefits include a real and visible involvement in the community's problems, with the attendant prestige and benefits to staff. The experience also suggested weaknesses in the traditional reference provision, which is generally inadequate to meet the wider needs of a community information service. This will be tested further in the extension to the project.

The presence of semi-independent agencies could reduce the likelihood of cuts affecting the host library since the effects will have wider ramifications throughout the community than those affecting the book-reading public alone.

8.2 What has the library service been able to offer to the project?

The library service has been able to offer a range of resources and

expertise which no other authority could match, including its widespread and established structure throughout the rural area; its traditional links with other authorities, e.g. education and social service departments; and its access to printed information. Although a small, traditional branch library may not be able to meet the demand alone, other libraries within the system can be called upon with prompt results. The expertise of library staff has been particularly valuable in obtaining this back-up and in collecting and ordering local information.

8.3 What has South Molton library gained?

Close contacts with information and advice agencies has facilitated South Molton library's task of dealing with enquiries. Whereas previously the staff may have had to refer people to an agency in Barnstaple or elsewhere, now they simply refer them through a door and up one flight of stairs. A client thus directed is more likely to respond positively than one directed to another town.

Involvement in community information has improved the image of the library — it is now seen (especially through the medium of the broadsheet) to be helping a wider range of people than those served by a traditional book-orientated library.

Being part of a team providing information in an isolated area improves staff morale.

8.4 What has the library been able to offer?

South Molton library offered to the other agencies a neutral, politically acceptable base, which is essential to agencies such as the CAB and the Volunteer Bureau.

The provision to the other agencies of reference material, local information and the general expertise of library staff was far easier with the agencies based at the library than at another location some distance away.

The longer opening hours of the library provided a contact point (and in some cases a direct source of help) when the other agencies were closed. This was especially useful in the evenings and on Saturday mornings.

The established links and practices of the library helped considerably in publicising the services available at the Centre, and in collecting and disseminating material for the broadsheet.

8.5 What have the other constituent agencies gained?

At the project committee level, both the Community Council and Area Office of the NACAB have benefitted from their close involvement with the project. There is tremendous value in the contacts that have been established or strengthened, which it is hoped will lead to further co-operation in the community information and other fields.

A further gain is the prestige value of being directly involved in a national experiment of this nature, for any successes that have been achieved are as much a result of their involvement as that of Devon Library Services.

Locally, agencies using the Centre's facilities have clearly gained a great deal. Apart from free use of the rooms themselves, there is an unquantifiable, but surely large, value in co-operating with other, often quite different, agencies in the course of providing their respective services. Each can learn from the others and, through helping each other in such small things as message taking, can provide a better service to the public.

8.6 What have the other agencies been able to offer?

Starting again with the project committee, both the CAB Area Officer and the Community Council Director had a great deal to offer in terms of their varied experience, quite apart from their personal support acknowledged elsewhere. Also important was the fact that both agencies represented were "outside" local government (although closely involved with many departments in various other activities). This produced a greater range of viewpoints, essential in discussing and planning action in such a wide subject as community information.

At the local level, each agency brings something different to a project such as this. Each volunteer or member of staff contributes something to the mix of skills and knowledge which, when blended smoothly together, produces a large part of the recipe for success.

8.7 Location of the Centre

One further, fundamental question requires to be posed. Does the Information Centre need to be based at the library? At South Molton, all

available evidence seems to point to an affirmative answer. The location was central, yet the entrance was not too conspicuously sited. The rooms themselves were ideal, although their position on the first floor was perhaps the major disadvantage. For reasons detailed above, the library and staff offered many facilities which could not be offered at any other location in the town.

Elsewhere, however, the library premises may not be ideal, and more suitable alternatives may be available. Nevertheless, the library service can assist in these situations by offering its resources "from a distance". Together with the information resources offered by a CAB, the involvement of a library authority seems, on the strength of the South Molton experience, to be an essential prerequisite of a successful rural Information Centre.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

The main conclusions of the project set out below are drawn together from earlier sections of the report.

9.1.1 Definition of study area

In defining a study area, or area to which a community service is to be provided, it is necessary to adopt a flexible attitude to boundaries, fitting in where possible with natural groupings and loyalties, rather than adhering to local government boundaries.

9.1.2 Obtaining local support

Obtaining the support of the local community is as important as obtaining that of the potential provider agencies. The following criteria were found to be useful in selecting the latter:

(1) representation of both voluntary and statutory sectors;

(2) a balance between generalist and specialist agencies;

(3) potential for benefitting from, and contributing to, the library's resources;

(4) suitability for sharing premises and facilities.

Organisations might be sympathetic to the idea of sharing premises, but there may be valid reasons for their declining to alter existing arrangements. Where the need for a service is sufficiently acute, it may be worth while considering ways of assisting the provider agency — financially or otherwise — to participate in the joint project.

9.1.3 First survey

The survey showed that the more directly the project officer was involved in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire, the greater was the response. In assessing need, one should first ask the professionals and

other information providers what needs exist, and then ask the general public. This enables one to obtain a quick overview of the type of needs likely to be encountered, as well as engaging the interest of significant agencies.

A problem common to many of the respondents was accessibility — or lack of it. The survey suggested that the project's main concern should be with improving communication channels between those needing information and advice and the sources of such help, rather than with setting up yet another organisation.

9.1.4 Setting up the Information Centre

The local liaison group, consisting of representatives of the various agencies in the Centre, plus those of outside bodies with a direct interest in its work, proved to be an essential forum for bringing people together and co-ordinating action. Nevertheless, further discussion meetings were necessary to ensure that workers in each agency were familiar with the work of the others.

Integration of two services with a degree of overlap (CAB and Volunteer Bureau) inevitably requires some re-definition of "boundaries" between them. This needs to be handled sensitively if the outcome is to be an amicable one.

Attempts at combining three separate information systems were not successful for physical and tactical reasons. The physical barrier (library and Information Centre on separate floors) remains, but it may now be possible to produce an integrated system on the first floor.

Tourist information could easily "swamp" other agencies through crowding of the reception area at busy times, deterring the clients of other agencies. The level of this service introduced at South Molton (a "tourist information point" rather than the more demanding "tourist information centre" designation) was probably about right.

The involvement of the South Molton Archive was a natural development from its previous connection with the library, and fitted in well with the other services.

The Small Firms Service was the only statutory service to be involved (apart from the library itself). Although in numerical terms a borderline case, when compared with other Small Firms Service clinics, the service

was valued at South Molton for its practical assistance to the business community.

9.1.5 Consolidating and extending

In terms of numbers of enquiries, the Information Centre did not make a great impact in the first eight months. It took time to publicise the venture effectively and for the public to accept it.

Division of responsibility for publicity worked well in practice. Individual agencies advertised their own services; the project committee advertised the Centre as a whole.

The monthly broadsheet proved to be extremely popular and was a valuable tool for the project. It has been well supported by local sponsors, and should be continued for as long as it fulfils a useful purpose.

The village representative scheme was established as a signposting and promotional service and as such proved to be quite effective. The introduction of directories should assist the development of the scheme.

Introduction of two new services in late 1981 indicates that although initial attempts at involvement fail, circumstances do change and must be monitored and responded to as appropriate.

Involvement in the booking arrangements for a concert by Yehudi Menuhin in South Molton Church brought into the Centre a large number of people who otherwise would probably have had no contact.

After a further year of operation the use of the various services had increased between twofold and threefold, showing the value of sustained publicity and the necessity of allowing a period of at least 18 months before any valid assessment of success can be made.

9.1.6 Final survey

In the final survey, a lower response rate (about 8%) did not preclude many useful comparisons with the first survey. For example, those that had been helped by one of the agencies at the Centre stressed the value of help being more readily available and of everything being "in one place". The organisations surveyed were particularly complimentary about the broadsheet — three-quarters had used the local events diary, and all felt it was worth continuing.

None of the replies to the various parts of the survey suggested that any major changes should be implemented. The successful ingredients seem to be the generalist nature of most of the services, combined with specialist help in certain areas such as business advice.

Finally, it was concluded that it may be necessary to undertake a further survey or consultation to ensure that the Centre remains sensitive to the needs of the community.

9.2 Recommendations regarding the future of South Molton Community Information Centre

With the production of this report scheduled to coincide with the end of the project period, certain decisions had to be made to secure the future of the Information Centre in advance of this report. These decisions have been concerned with the following aspects:

(i) Transfer of committee responsibility from the project committee to the local liaison group, in anticipation of a transition from a centrally funded research project to a locally funded Information Centre.

(ii) Transfer of managerial responsibility from the project officer to a part-time co-ordinator (the South Molton librarian) together with responsibility for monitoring the transition, and for reporting on this to the British Library.

(iii) Application to the British Library Research and Development Department to fund the project for a further year to allow time for the above arrangements to be implemented and tested.

These decisions were taken by the project committee in full consultation with the local liaison group. The application to the British Library Research and Development Department was made in August 1981 (see Section 10 for details), and notification of their award of a grant for 1982/83 was confirmed in February 1982.

In anticipation of the need to begin the next round of grant application in 1982 for 1983/84, the local liaison group was given the role of an embryo steering committee. The former County Councillor for the area, Mr David Verney JP, accepted the project committee's invitation to chair this committee, and the local liaison group began to consider the possible sources of funding and timing of applications in late 1981.

The following recommendations are therefore put forward:

The project committee should retain responsibility for the Information Centre for as long as it is in receipt of British Library funding.

The steering committee should be formed from the existing membership of the local liaison group, with the addition of such further representatives as are deemed necessary (e.g. a solicitor, accountant or bank manager), and that it should meet as soon after the end of the project period (February 1982) as is practicable to begin drafting applications for funding the Centre in 1983.

This report, or a summary of its main findings, should be used as the basis of such applications, together with any further evidence that may be available at the time of application.

For the period March 1982 — February 1983, the South Molton librarian should be responsible for the general management of the Information Centre, and for conducting research into the following aspects:

— the information role of South Molton library, now that the nature and "content" of the Centre are established; this might include investigation of the relevance of current stock, and determination of suitable provision for the future;

— the operation of an Information Centre under a local part-time manager, including identification of the workload of such a manager;

— the identification of possible alternative methods of running the Centre;

— the exploration of the financial means of converting a research project into a locally funded and locally managed Information Centre.

10 Extension of the Project

As noted in Section 9.2, application for a one-year extension to the project was made to the British Library Research and Development Department in August 1981, and the award of a grant was confirmed in February 1982.

The additional year was necessary

(i) because the rate of change and acceptance of new developments, normally slow, are accentuated in a rural area with a widely dispersed population; hence two years was not considered an adequate period in which to assess success;

(ii) because, despite this, it was nevertheless considered that the experience of the project as described in the preceding sections, was sufficiently encouraging to warrant continuation and development of the Information Centre.

An extension of the project by one year would be used:

— to permit the Information Centre to operate under a local part-time co-ordinator/manager, for which there is no relevant practical experience documented at present;

— to use the local librarian in this role — details of the specific usefulness of a librarian could emerge as well as precise identification of the workload of a non-librarian manager, should this become the eventual choice;

— to explore the financial means of converting a research project into a locally funded, locally managed information centre.

Specific tasks to be undertaken during the extension year (Phase Four):

— **Information directory.** The compilation of an information directory to provide an essential link between village representatives and others and the Centre is already under way. Phase Four will permit both its production and its testing.

— **Management.** Day-to-day management and co-ordination has so far been undertaken by the project officer. Phase Four will present the opportunity of testing the effectiveness of a part-time manager/co-ordinator (South Molton librarian), who is both closely related to, but quite separate from, the user agencies. The project committee will continue to be responsible for overall management. In addition, steps have already been taken for a local steering committee to evolve from the local liaison group and others whose role will be local management, and this will form the basis of the Centre's continuation after the project ends.

— **Finance.** By mid-way through Phase Four applications will be submitted to local bodies for independent financial support. These could include county, district, town and parish councils, as well as local charitable trusts.

— **Village representatives.** The village representatives' role will be consolidated and developed during Phase Four. Training and information sessions will be held during the year.

— **Broadsheet.** Although the project committee has developed this extremely popular information provider as a self-financing enterprise, its costs have always, theoretically, been underwritten by the research project. Phase Four will see it operating on a totally self-financing basis.

During Phase Four, Devon Library Services will continue to be responsible for:

1. Rent and rates of the premises
2. Telephone accounts
3. Office cleaning
4. Clerical support and stationery
5. Postage

A one-year extension (Phase Four) will provide both the time and the opportunity to convert an important research project into a permanent and useful, locally financed facility. First-hand information will become available on the practical management and financial problems likely to be encountered by others considering setting up a rural community information centre. Some solutions to the problems will be thoroughly tested.

Annex 1—Reflections on the Project

Helene Curtis, Project Consultant

As the first part of this report shows, the South Molton project has achieved its aims. The experience gained should provide guidance to other libraries wishing to improve rural community information/advice services.

Application of that experience in other areas will be conditioned by each rural community's needs for information and advice services, the existing provision, and available resources. Any plan involving different agencies and organisations working together, must be undertaken in a spirit of co-operation. This spirit is one of the main reasons for the success of the South Molton project. Co-operation is easier said than done, however, and it is worth looking in some detail at the nature of co-operation between agencies, at the factors that foster co-operation, and those that work against it.

Inter-agency co-operation

A timely investigation into the nature of inter-agency co-operation offers findings which can be usefully applied in the South Molton context. NACAB has produced a discussion paper for bureaux about national and local initiatives in which CABx have co-operated with other advice agencies (NACAB, 1982). They identified a list of factors relating to the nature of co-operation from an analysis of 29 examples of local groupings of agencies. Among these examples there are six different patterns of groups:

— agencies which meet to exchange information and develop contacts;

— agencies coming together for various specific purposes, e.g. the provision by the library service of improved local information services or the development of inter-agency referral systems;

— single interest groups concerned with particular areas of advice work, e.g. the development of legal services;

— short-term groups set up to meet an emergency need, e.g. refusal of benefit to redundant workers;

— formal groups set up to devise a strategy and co-ordinate the planning and development of advice services within a specific area;

— groups established for the purposes of research or review.

NACAB found that those groups which have worked successfully depend on the following factors:

(i) shared objective/s;

(ii) genuine commitment on the part of the members;

(iii) continued reason for the existence of the groups;

(iv) willingness of members to accept the groups' decisions;

(v) proper servicing (preferably by salaried staff).

The absence of even one of these factors tends to work against co-operation. NACAB ascribed the failure or relative failure of other groups to one or more of the following factors:

(vi) lack of clearly defined objectives;

(vii) inter-agency suspicion;

(viii) conflict of interest;

(ix) competition for resources;

(x) "political" incompatibility;

(xi) wrong composition of groups;

(xii) lack of servicing.

In applying these factors to the South Molton project, it is possible to see where the positive factors helped to foster co-operation, and also where the presence of the negative factors could have jeopardised the whole outcome of the project had they not been recognised and tackled at an early stage.

Shared objectives

The proposal for the project was based on the shared objectives of those responsible for its promotion at both county and local level.

At county level, it involved seeking informal agreement on the objectives with the Chief Librarian and key staff, the Community Council of Devon, and the CAB Area Office. All these bodies had a different perspective of the county as a whole. They saw it respectively from the point of view of library needs, community interests and advice provision. The senior officers of the three bodies eventually became members of the project committee and confirmed, for this county anyway, that this was an appropriate mixture of interests.

Those responsible for funding and supporting the project, the British Library Research and Development Department and the Devon County Amenities and Countryside Committee, also needed to sympathise with the objectives of the project. Both informal and formal approaches on the part of the project head, library staff and project committee were necessary to achieve this.

At local level, the objectives needed to be shared by the information/advice providers, other community services, political interests, and above all the South Molton public. General agreement about the need for a Centre was arrived at largely through the library service convening a local meeting to debate the proposal, as well as through many informal discussions with all the interests involved.

It was the local liaison group which had to work hardest in order to establish common objectives. In the beginning, when the group operated as a "committee of service providers", its members were preoccupied with establishing their own particular service in the Centre. Not surprisingly, their concern was to use the Centre to offer a more locally based service for their potential users. This is a valid primary objective for each agency. Without it the agencies would have had little reason to use the Centre at all. In the early stages, therefore, the agencies did not share a concern for the Information Centre for its own sake.

Once the agencies were settled in the Centre, the project officer was able to help them formulate the second level of objectives. These related to such day-to-day needs of the Centre as decorating and furnishing, installation of telephones, maintenance, internal signposting, and so on.

At this stage of the project's development, it is possible that one of the negative factors listed above — inter-agency suspicion — might have built up had not the project officer and librarian realised that the user agencies (even though they were referring clients to each other) were not really clear as to what services the other agencies provided. The problem was dealt with by holding briefing sessions on the work of each agency at informal lunchtime meetings. An interesting spin-off from these events was the recognition that the Centre's agencies also needed to know more about local agencies and departments that operated outside the Centre. This led to alternating Centre meetings with more open meetings at which local social workers, voluntary and other community workers spoke about their areas of work.

The significance of these developments lies in the fact that there was a link person within the Centre to recognise a need and have the resources to respond to it, in co-operation with the agencies themselves.

As the liaison group gained a stronger sense of identity with the Centre and a clearer idea of its new responsibilities (not least because of these meetings) it was able to move on to a third set of objectives: to take over the project committee's responsibilities in anticipation of a centrally funded project becoming a locally funded one; the liaison group strengthened its membership by introducing councillors representing district, town and county in order to help meet these new objectives.

As the project has demonstrated, shared objectives can change in an organisation which itself is changing over a period of time. There is therefore an implied need for an impartial and skilled chairman who is a good communicator and is sensitive to the needs of the group. It also implies that members need to be flexible in outlook and to have a genuine sense of commitment to the cause.

Genuine commitment on the part of the members

A barrier to commitment to the Centre as a whole, and to ease of communication, may have been the layout of the premises, with the library on the ground floor and other agencies on the first. In addition, none of the agencies (other than the South Molton Archive and the

library) had previously worked in close contact with each other. When people work on the same floor casual conversation can develop naturally, and from these beginnings a useful exchange of information can follow. This is more difficult, as in South Molton, where the various agency workers have to make a special trip or pick up the telephone in order to talk to the librarian downstairs. The librarian therefore had to take the initiative in establishing informal relationships with the other agencies' staff.

Genuine commitment does not appear overnight. This is particularly true when virtually all the staff in a centre are not there every day. It is typical of rural areas that staff spend only part of their working week at a particular office (such as Inland Revenue, Rates Department, Social Security office or Job Centre). At South Molton, for example, the agencies who use the Information Centre, apart from the library, are all there on a part-time basis, and even the librarian spends one day of the week at Chulmleigh library, 10 miles away. It is therefore probable that in a Centre like South Molton it would take longer to build up a sense of commitment than in one where all the workers see each other every day.

A conflict of interest could also reduce a sense of commitment, and this was to some extent present at the start of the project. The Volunteer Bureau was at first uncertain about its need to participate in the Centre, though it wholly supported its objectives. Apart from having to give up well placed, ground-floor High Street premises, the Bureau workers realised that they would have to pass much of their advisory work on to the CAB workers who were specially trained for this. Despite this apparent conflict of interest, the Bureau believed in the value of a multi-user centre and was in fact its first occupant.

It is generally recognised that in areas where there are no other advice centres, Volunteer Bureaux tend to be maids-of-all-work, and South Molton's Bureau was no exception. As new agencies come to be established in a locality — quite often because the Volunteer Bureau has pinpointed the need for them — the Bureau needs to change its own role. The impact of this kind of change must not be under-estimated. The Bureau has recruited volunteers to take on a given volume and kind of work: if this decreases or changes then volunteers may well lose interest and begin to leave. The organiser and management may lose heart unless they can see some other way in which they might be useful to the local community.

The Volunteer Bureau's Annual General Meeting in May 1981 was an impressive example of how an apparent crisis in an agency's development

can lead to really useful, positive results. At that meeting the Bureau tried to find ways in which it could continue to help people in the area now that its advisory role had been taken over. This led to identification of the need for effective transport: access to all kinds of services (hospitals, clinics, shopping centres, etc.) is a key problem for the car-less country dweller. The Volunteer Bureau did as a result change the emphasis of its work and set about developing more effective local voluntary transport services, thereby helping many otherwise housebound people.

Management

The group of agencies that make up the users of the Information Centre may have a continued reason to stay in existence because of public demand, but its management must stay in tune with that public. One of the tasks of a permanent management committee will be to make sure that the report's recommendation for a further survey be undertaken, "to ensure that the Centre remains sensitive to the needs of the community".

This is especially relevant in a Centre like South Molton, where each user agency or member of the liaison group is responsible to a different employing or delegating body. These bodies differ in function, organisation, style of work and level of funding. They have different time-scales for their meetings and hence, decision making. In order to build a successful multi-user Centre it is necessary to make allowances for the constraints within which each member organisation operates.

Another factor is that of personality. In any group or committee there may be dominating personalities, the strength of whose views can obstruct progress even if they represent a minority of one or two. This affects the ability of members to accept a group's decisions. The project workers found no complete answer to this universally recognised feature of community work, but their actions suggest that they respected everyone's views, and recognised the value of spending time with these "strong personalities" rather than isolating them from the project. They adopted a neutral stance, attaching importance at every stage of development to involving the key community representatives and political interests of the area. County, district, town and parish level councils or community bodies have all been involved, and the use of the Centre by the local Member of Parliament for his surgeries adds a further dimension.

It was also important to involve all levels of the library service (i.e. county, area and local librarians) each of whom had a vital contribution

to make to the success of the project. The Centre needed support from all these interests to encourage its use by agencies; to attract financial support or help in kind; and to promote its use by the public.

Another negative factor could have arisen if the differing needs of users had not been taken into account in the planning stages of the Centre, for example the CAB's need for two interviewing rooms to ensure confidentiality, or the Volunteer Bureau's need to retain its former, familiar telephone number.

The project officer was careful to protect agencies from being overwhelmed by work they could not handle, hence the decision to establish a small scale tourist point at the Centre, rather than a full-blown tourist office whose presence could have distorted the image of the Centre as well as swamped the other agencies.

Servicing

This factor has been crucial at all stages of the project. For the Centre itself, day-to-day maintenance is obviously essential to ensure that it is a pleasant and workable place. For member agencies, an efficient message service has been an essential aspect of servicing. In the absence of a particular agency's workers, it is vital that someone is available to make an enquirer feel that the Centre is a place worth turning to for help, even when the agency needed is not in at the moment. This highlights the need for a link person to service the Centre as a whole.

Both the project committee and liaison group needed proper servicing in terms of minutes, preparing and circulating papers, and arranging dates of meetings. The NACAB discussion paper suggests that servicing should be "preferably by paid workers", and the experience at South Molton showed that the volume and range of work required the services of a paid co-ordinator. It was also a crucial advantage that behind the co-ordinator lay further library resources for making the task easier — typing and reprographic facilities, means of easy contact with different parts of the county through the library network, and a permanent base in the library itself, whose opening hours were longer than those of any other users of the Centre.

The factors that are said to make for inter-agency co-operation — shared objectives; genuine commitment; continued reason for existence; willingness to accept the group's decisions and proper servicing — all proved essential to the success of the project. Yet it is clear that the first four

factors would have had little chance of leading to practical realities without the fifth factor, proper servicing.

Some other aspects of the project are worth mentioning.

Timetable

The timetable in Section 4.6 shows how long it takes to get a project like this off the ground. Others wishing to follow suit will need to spend less time because the project has done some of the work for them, for example the case for advice services in rural areas generally has been well argued. For areas similar to South Molton, the project has been able to test various possibilities for providing local information/advice services, to discover the likely pitfalls, and to explore the potential for further development. Other areas will have to assess both their needs and resources in order to decide whether this kind of project would be feasible for them.

Project officer and project consultant

The project officer was ideally suited for the job. It was not only a matter of skills, experience and personality, but it was also a help that he was a countryman himself and had local connections. He understood the language and was aware of individual and community areas of sensitivity; this helped him to develop the research and the Centre at the right pace. All these attributes were important for establishing credibility in an area of close-knit social networks where one false move might have damaged the project's chances irrevocably.

The value of external consultants should also be emphasised. At different points of the project, for example, advice was needed on survey methodology, on the nature of other rural advice services, the work of voluntary bodies, issues of community development, and so on. An "attached" consultant plus expert advisers can provide this range of advice.

Community development and volunteers

The village representatives scheme and the production of local directories is now well in hand. It is too soon, however, to know whether representatives will remain content with their purely promotional

activities. Demands placed on them by enquiries may necessitate a reassessment of their role at some future date. The scheme may also open the way for more localised developments. Not enough is known about the comparative effectiveness of various village representative or contact schemes which have been developed over the last decade; it would be helpful if an evaluative paper on the subject could be published.

Volunteers have played a dominant role in the development of the Information Centre. Within the Centre itself the majority of workers in the user agencies are also volunteers. But voluntary workers are really a form of hidden subsidy. Proposers of similar projects, or information and advice agencies themselves, might wish to estimate how much it would cost if all the voluntary workers had to be paid at a normal rate. In this way, funders would have a clearer picture of the true cost of the work involved.

In order to encourage voluntary work it is increasingly recognised that this costs money, particularly in rural areas where fares and petrol costs can be exorbitant. Volunteers' expenses should be allowed for in estimates for grants to bodies that use voluntary help.

A future review of the Centre should seek to identify further community initiatives, and the roles which can be filled by volunteers.

Future review of the South Molton Information Centre

The proposals put forward (Section 10) for the 1982/83 extension period underline the critical need for this experimental project to test the feasibility of becoming independent of its funders. This final year will demonstrate whether the South Molton project can successfully attract permanent funding and establish a satisfactory management structure once British Library funding is withdrawn.

After the librarian produces the supplementary report describing progress from February 1982-83, there is no provision for further assessment of the Centre once it becomes entirely independent. It is this post-project period that is so often neglected in community research, and it would be a pity if this were to happen.

Will there be further changes or development in terms of:

— numbers of people who use the Centre's agencies;

— types of problems and enquiries made;

— agencies using the Centre;

— library commitment to the Centre;

— information resources;

— community initiatives linked to the Centre;

— management and finance?

These and other questions could usefully be answered if a review of the Centre were undertaken in two or three years from its becoming independent of the project funders. It is very much to be hoped that the British Library will commission a review, and the monitoring necessary to collect the relevant data over the next two or three years. There is still more to be learnt from the South Molton experience.

PART II

Sally Cotton

1 Introduction

This part of the report covers the extension phase of the British Library's Community Information Project at South Molton, North Devon, from March 1982 to March 1983.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this fourth and final phase were:

— to develop the management of the Information Centre by a local steering committee and part-time co-ordinator;

— to submit applications to local bodies for financial support;

— to consolidate and develop the role of the village representatives;

— to produce an information directory to provide a link between village representatives and others and the Centre;

— to continue to develop the broadsheet as a self-financing venture.

1.2 Co-ordination

The project officer, David Venner, left when his contract ended after submitting his report on the first three phases of the project at the end of

February 1982. During the last few months of his work, he had briefed the librarian to take over as co-ordinator/manager of the Centre in addition to her duties at South Molton and Chulmleigh libraries. She had also taken over the editorship of the broadsheet during September 1981. This resulted in changes in the running of the Centre and of the project. The change in co-ordinator might have resulted in a disruption of the links and contacts built up over two years by the project officer had not the local librarian had the opportunity to work with the agencies using the Centre, local organisations and village representatives, and was not therefore starting completely "cold".

The project officer had devoted a full 37-hour week to researching and developing the Information Centre. In Phase IV, this time was reduced to 16 hours a week, with the result that the agencies and village representatives saw less of their co-ordinator. These 16 hours were "borrowed" from the librarian's time and replaced by extra hours for existing and casually employed library assistants. (The librarian's time was divided between South Molton (27 hours) and Chulmleigh (10 hours).) In practice, all the hours were "borrowed" from South Molton where an experienced staff had worked with the project since its beginning. It was one of the objectives of Phase IV to establish part-time co-ordination by the South Molton librarian and to identify the tasks involved.

During the first three phases of the project, the project officer had exercised a central, neutral role as co-ordinator of the Centre. The library had been identified during these phases as offering a neutral, politically acceptable base for the other agencies and an extensive back-up service in terms of reference and information resources, an out-of-hours contact point and well established local links. The use of the librarian as Centre co-ordinator for Phase IV was a natural extension of the role.

The change from a project officer to a librarian as co-ordinator involved a change in stance, and resulted in different experience being brought to bear on the Centre's developments. The project officer's research had laid the foundations; the local librarian was to use his research to help develop an Information Centre independent of the project's framework. The partnership and support of all the agencies involved provided a sound foundation for future development.

1.3 Dissemination of project findings

The Community Information Project at South Molton became better known among librarians and other information advice workers over the

year. Publications such as *Community information: what libraries can do* (LA, 1980) led to an increasing number of visitors from all over the country to observe developments in South Molton.

1.3.1 Project conference, October 1982

The results of the first three phases of the project were disseminated to staffs of libraries, CABx, community councils and other advice and information workers at a conference held in South Molton in October 1982. While the primary aim of the conference was to ensure that the results of the British Library funded project were made known to a national audience drawn from a wide spectrum of interests, it also made a significant impact on the local scene (programme and list of attenders, Appendices 11, 12).

The county, district and town councils were actively involved at senior officer and member level, allowing them to be fully briefed on the Centre's work and potential. Considerable interest was generated beyond those who actually attended the conference, and the ideas and support it stimulated gave impetus to subsequent work on development and fund raising.

The conference was a prestige event for the South Molton area. Many local people and premises were involved in providing accommodation, catering and transport. New contacts were made, and the local publicity was invaluable.

1.3.2 Rural Advice and Information Conference, December 1982

The reverse side of the coin was shown at the Rural Advice and Information Conference in December 1982. In contrast to the South Molton conference, a London venue and display of a wide variety of different rural advice and information projects from all parts of the country allowed the project head and South Molton librarian to absorb a great deal of useful comparative information in a short time and to relate it to the South Molton scene. Contacts with others involved in community information were very useful for clarifying ideas and investigating alternative solutions; this constant exchange of ideas did much to dispel the isolation which can be a problem for rural projects.

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2 Project Timetable (Phase IV)

Year 5 (1982)

1982

February	New mobile librarian appointed County Councillor's monthly surgery started Community information leaflets on mobile increased
March	Specialist advisers invited to join local liaison group Village representatives started to compile local organisation lists South Molton branch of Gingerbread started at Centre Accommodation guide 1982 published
April	Monthly community information displays in library started October 1982 conference planning started Voluntary secretary recruited for the Centre More village representatives recruited
May	Council for Christian Care started monthly surgery Community Council of Devon surgery
June	Planning meeting for October 1982 conference Applications for future funding made to local authorities
July	Community lunch — school and community Community lunch — fund-raising charities
August	Small Firms Service clinics finished; counselling continued
September	Accommodation guide 1983 planned More village representatives recruited Gingerbread outgrew Centre Float entered in South Molton Carnival
October	South Molton Community Information Conference Widows group formed at Centre
November	Rural Community Council village contact schemes launched Accommodation guide 1983 published

December
First Member of Parliament's surgery
Community lunch — self-employed advisory service
(Rural Advice and Information Conference)
Volunteer Bureau organiser resigned

1983

January
(BBC Radio Devon opened)
(South Molton Square car park closed)

February
Quakers started South Molton group at Centre
Small Firms Service appointed North Devon counsellor
Chairman of Volunteer Bureau resigned
Widows group joined Cruse and outgrew the Centre

March
Community information display on mobile library started
Acting chairman and organiser of Volunteer Bureau appointed
Local organisation list for South Molton produced
Tourist attraction leaflet published
Village representative questionnaire
Terms of reference for the Centre passed by County Amenities and Countryside Committee
Funding agreed by North Devon District Council and Devon County Council
Final Phase IV completed

The timetable above marks arrivals to the Centre — Gingerbread, Cruse Social Club, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Council for Christian Care. The County Councillor and the Member of Parliament also became actively involved in the Centre during the year. The first two, Gingerbread and Cruse, also departed in search of larger premises. There were also changes in the use of the Centre by the Small Firms Service and the Volunteer Bureau. Such a fluid situation, with the Centre reacting to changing needs and circumstances, demonstrates the need for flexibility and the importance of external stimulation. Continuous contact with organisations outside the Centre allowed it to act as a catalyst, supporting new ideas in the community, such as Cruse and Gingerbread, fostering them within the Centre and helping them to become realities. To do this, the Centre had to be aware of the community's needs and preoccupations and be seen as a natural focus for initiatives.

There were a few changes to the premises: the hallway, downstairs interview room and staircase were redecorated, much improving the visitor's first view of the Centre. The signs advertising the Centre and its various agencies were renewed and improved, and a new noticeboard advertising all the Centre's agencies and societies was added on the wall at the foot of the stairs. In March 1983, the premises were redecorated outside, resulting in a temporary loss of identity inside a cocoon of scaffolding. Both the mobile and branch libraries set aside areas for the display of books and leaflets relating to community information.

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3 The Study Area

The project study area remained unchanged in Phase IV in order to provide consistency throughout the three-year research period. There was pressure for changes during Phase IV based on various perceptions of the "natural hinterland" of South Molton. Suggestions that areas on the southern and eastern fringes of the project area be included had already been partly taken up by the appointment of village representatives in Burrington, East and West Worlington and East Anstey, all outside the area. No further action to rationalise the area was taken during Phase IV.

South Molton and its hinterland are described in detail in Part I Section 3. The following paragraphs update the information set out there.

General. The county structure plan (Devon County Council, 1979b) was adopted by the county council in February 1979 and has since been published with South Molton designated as an "area centre" and Chulmleigh and Witheridge as "selected local centres".

Population. South Molton's increasing number of elderly residents has encouraged the opening of a new private residential home for the elderly, and there are plans for further private and council developments.

Employment. The unemployment rate for the Barnstaple Employment Area had risen to 11.8% by February 1983 but (although separate figures are not available) the rate in South Molton and its hinterland continued to be substantially lower.

Communications. Construction of Stage I of the new North Devon Link Road, which will eventually link Barnstaple to the M5 motorway and Tiverton (21 miles from South Molton) was begun. A number of improvements were made to the A396 (Tiverton-Bampton), A361 (Taunton-South Molton-Barnstaple), and B3221 (Tiverton-South Molton) roads, which are expected to carry increased traffic pending the completion of Stage II of the Link Road (Tiverton-Barnstaple). There were a number of changes to bus and coach schedules in the project area during Phase IV, resulting in further reductions in services. The Western National Omnibus Company was divided into small companies: North Devon Ltd. is now responsible for service in the project area. The South Exmoor Car Service continued to operate using voluntary drivers and their cars to provide an on-request service between East and West Anstey,

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South Molton and Dulverton. The Volunteer Bureau car scheme also continued throughout Phase IV. In an area with limited public transport, the telephone is an important communication link. Rutex (the Rural Transport Experiment which set up the South Exmoor Car Service) conducted a survey of 414 households in the parishes of North Molton, Twitchen, Molland, East and West Anstey, and found that 63.3% had a telephone in the house and 26.6% within five minutes walk (Devon Rutex Working Group, 198?).

Voluntary and statutory organisations. As might be expected, there were some minor changes in the local voluntary organisations. For example, the Royal British Legion closed, but a Cruse Social Club opened. There were no changes in the representation of statutory organisations other than those linked to the Information Centre: the Small Firms Service, and the careers service.

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4 The Organisations

4.1 Volunteer Bureau

The Bureau continued to operate its volunteer car service, and developed links with the local comprehensive school, co-operating with the police on a free security-lock scheme for the elderly in the area, and working towards providing a much needed gardening scheme for the elderly and disabled. The Bureau also helped to provide volunteers to man the tourist information point during the holiday season and to deliver books to the housebound in co-operation with the library, and continued its fund-raising activities.

In spite of these developments, the Volunteer Bureau still felt unsure of its role following the loss of its advice work to the CAB. This uncertainty came into the open with the resignation of its organiser, Mr Foster, at the end of 1982 for family reasons, followed within two months by the resignation of Mr Foster's successor as chairman of the Bureau's committee, which caused the trustees, committee and volunteers to re-think their position. They came to the conclusion that the Bureau was already fulfilling some of the needs for voluntary work and volunteer co-ordination in the South Molton area, but that such needs should be actively explored further. An acting chairman (Lady Stevens, also the Centre's village representative in East and West Worlington) and secretary were to continue the work of organisation and to research the future role of the Bureau until the annual general meeting due in May 1983. The CAB worker in charge at South Molton was co-opted on to the committee, and the librarian became a non-voting member. The Bureau's 45 volunteers continued its work of providing transport and home visiting, supported by a seven-days-a-week telephone service, in addition to the regular office hours of the Centre. The Bureau continued to work with the school, health centre, social services, churches and police on community welfare projects. It increased its hours of opening in the Centre from six to nine hours a week as a consequence of the travel arrangements of the secretary. The Volunteer Bureau made use of the Centre's broadsheet and local press to advertise its activities and keep local people informed of its progress (see Table 1).

4.2 Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB continued to open every morning from 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

and on Thursday (market day) from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. New volunteers were recruited and trained in May 1982, giving the Bureau a staff of eight part-time workers. The Bureau saw an average of 70 clients per month between April 1982 and March 1982, compared with 51 per month over a similar period in 1981, a 40% increase (see Table 1). As the volume of tribunal work increased in North Devon as a whole, the CAB staff member who had specialised in this work moved to Barnstaple where a service is now provided for the whole of North Devon. In collaboration with the library, the Bureau provided a selection of leaflets on a topic each month for display in the branch library and on the mobile library, with related books. The worker in charge also helped to maintain and select the library's community information bookstock. She was also co-opted on to the committee of the Volunteer Bureau (February 1982). Full use was made by the Bureau of the Centre's broadsheet to keep readers up-to-date with changes in benefits, the law, etc. from the monthly press releases supplied by NACAB; it also used the broadsheet to ask for information on long-term accommodation, and to recruit staff. People were also kept informed through the BBC's local Radio Devon Link-line programme, which began when the station opened in January 1983; South Molton CAB staff were involved in the production of this programme with their Devon colleagues on a rota basis. The Bureau is in frequent contact with other local organisations such as the town and district councils, the police, social services, Department of Health and Social Security, and Inland Revenue.

4.3 Tourist information

The tourist information service provided by the Centre has been cautiously expanded during Phase IV in response to local demand. The Centre continued to be a "tourist information point" manned in the high season (July and August) by volunteers provided by the Volunteer Bureau and in low season by CAB and Volunteer Bureau workers in conjunction with their other work. In April 1982, a self-financed accommodation guide was produced with the help of a small group of local accommodation providers; a second edition for 1983 was produced in November 1982 for a similar distribution, and in April 1983 5,000 copies of a leaflet describing 11 local tourist attractions was published on a similar basis. The tourist information service has been allowed to develop in response to the demands of local people rather than those of the tourist. The season experienced at the Centre was very short and not busy, so that a good balance was maintained with the other organisations (see Table 1). The value of publishing guides was seen outside the building; the Centre provided a focus for local people to co-operate in

MONTH	CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU			VOLUNTEER BUREAU TRANSPORT	SMALL FIRMS SERVICE		TOURIST INFORMATION POINT	LIBRARY		
	New enquiries	*Repeat enquiries*	*Total*		*Clinic services*	*Counselling services*		*Enquiries*	*Subject requests**	*New adult membership*
APR 82	68	21	89	23	3	6	25	56	22	28
MAY 82	38	13	51	29	3	2	17	54	28	32
JUNE 82	72	27	99	39	4	3	51	109	20	18
JULY 82	53	11	64	39	1	2	107	143	25	30
AUG 82	61	13	74	35	**	1	183	143	26	35
SEP 82	62	12	74	35	—	1	55	163	33	34
OCT 82	49	13	62	35	—	3	8	133	37	26
NOV 82	55	16	71	44	—	4	3	118	23	15
DEC 82	35	11	46	12	—	1	5	111	22	20
JAN 83	57	8	65	16	—	1	5	160	28	26
FEB 83	57	10	67	42	—	2	4	155	36	49
MAR 83	67	18	85	30	—	5	7	123	38	31
TOTAL	674	173	847	379	11	31	470	1,468	338	344

* "Subject Requests" — Enquiries not satisfied from branch library resources or other Centre agencies and referred to North Area library

** See Part II, Section 4.7

Table 1 Enquiries made at South Molton Information Centre, April 1982 to March 1983

encouraging visitors to stay locally and to visit local attractions. It was also a tangible sign of the Centre's local commitment. The Centre continued to co-operate with other local tourist information providers, notably the South Molton Town Council (producers of the South Molton and district guide), neighbouring tourist information centres at Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Bampton and Tiverton, and the Exmoor National Park Centre at Dulverton.

4.4 Council for Christian Care

Following an initiative of the chairman of the Volunteer Bureau, the Council for Christian Care's social worker in North Devon held surgeries from 10.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month from June 1982. Specialising in family matters, single parent problems, adoption, and deaf welfare, the Council is run by the Anglican diocese of Exeter on an ecumenical basis. Response to these surgeries was very low, but the social worker found the Centre to be a useful haven to write up notes between home visits in the area. Following a cut in her hours in October 1982, the surgeries were reduced to one a month on the first Wednesday from 10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. She works closely with the health centre, social services, hospitals and churches.

4.5 County Councillor

The County Councillor for the South Molton area, Councillor James Isaac, moved his monthly surgeries from the Liberal Club to the Centre in March 1982. Councillor Isaac felt that the apolitical image of the Centre might encourage those he represents of all or any political persuasion to call in and see him freely. An average of two or three people have visited their Councillor during his surgeries held on the first Thursday of each month from 11.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. These surgeries have been publicised in the broadsheet and by posters distributed throughout the area. Councillor Isaac was invited to join the local liaison group in March 1982 as an adviser, and has become a most active and supportive member of the group and of the Centre.

4.6 Member of Parliament

Mr Tony Speller, MP for North Devon (Conservative) visited the Centre first in October 1980. His first surgery was held at the Centre on a Saturday evening, 18 December 1982. It was advertised in the broadsheet,

local press, and through a few posters distributed around South Molton. Seven people came to speak to Mr Speller on four different matters (which was a typical number). A further surgery was planned on Saturday morning, 7 May 1983. Mr Speller, who had given his support to the project from the beginning, moved his surgeries from the Constitutional Club in the Square for similar reasons to the County Councillor, namely that a non-political venue would be more acceptable to his constituents.

4.7 Small Firms Service

The Department of Industry's Small Firms Service continued its monthly clinics (i.e. "drop in" sessions) and weekly counselling sessions on Fridays until July 1982. Following their normal August break, the clinics were transferred to Barnstaple, while counselling continued at South Molton and Bideford on Fridays, usually fortnightly. This change reflected the fact that most clients came from the more industrialised Barnstaple-Bideford area. Dartington North Devon Trust set up its own advisory service to the self-employed in 1982 in Barnstaple, offering a service to small business people, including those involved in agriculture (which the Small Firms Service excludes). Visits to the CAB and to one of the Centre's lunchtime discussions by the Trust's counsellor resulted in some local enquiries being referred to his service. The Small Firms Service has meanwhile recruited a counsellor based in North Devon to take over from the previous counsellor, who travelled from Taunton, and counselling continues on two or three Fridays a month. The Service advertises its clinics in the local press, and refers clients from there to counselling sessions. It has made no use of the Centre's broadsheet although invited to do so (for statistics see Table 1).

4.8 Careers service

The facility extended to the careers service to use the Centre for interviews was set up in October 1981, but as yet it has not been used. The service visits local schools and youth clubs, holding interviews at the former. Contact with the Area Careers Officer and the Careers Officer covering the South Molton area over the last year showed them to be well aware of the facilities available at the Centre, which was listed in their literature as available for interviews by appointment. At present the careers service perceives no apparent need for such a service on this basis in South Molton.

4.9 Marriage Guidance Council

The Centre continued to be available to the Council for interviews in South Molton, but no interviews were held between January 1982 and March 1983. However, the Council wished to keep this facility open.

4.10 South Molton Archive

The South Molton Archive, a local history society, continued to use the Centre for its meetings. A dwindling membership led to doubts about its future, but work continued on its collection of slides of old photographs of South Molton, various local history enquiries, and recording of reminiscences. A very successful slide show was held in November 1982, and ideas to revitalise the society's programme are currently under discussion.

4.11 Gingerbread

A South Molton branch of Gingerbread, the organisation for the single-parent family, was founded on the initiative of a local single parent at the Centre in March 1982. It grew gradually, the local liaison group providing moral support during early disheartening progress, until the summer, when a large number of people from Barnstaple joined (Barnstaple's own branch of Gingerbread had closed some time before). Having outgrown the Centre, the group moved to the Church Hall in October 1982. Since then a new Barnstaple Gingerbread has been formed with the encouragement of the South Molton branch and, having lost some members to the newly formed widows' group, the remaining members now meet in each other's houses.

4.12 Cruse Social Club

This local social club branch of Barnstaple Cruse (the national organisation for widows and widowers) was started at the Centre on the initiative of a local widow in November 1982. A considerable amount of exploration was made through local organisations to assemble a group which met at the Centre for several weeks under the title of the Group for the Bereaved before it was adopted by Cruse. Success led to an increased membership and, for reasons of space, the group moved out of the Centre to meet across the road at the Amory Centre from February 1983. There it continued to meet fortnightly with a trained Cruse counsellor in attendance.

4.13 Women's Group

The South Molton Women's Group continued to hold its meetings at the Centre throughout Phase IV, changing its fortnightly evening from Wednesdays to Mondays in August 1982. With a membership of 10 to 15, mainly recruited through the broadsheet, the Group exists to discuss the changing role of women.

4.14 Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) approached the Centre for room to hold their meetings on the first and third Sunday mornings of each month (the latter including a children's class). Unlike the South Molton branches of Gingerbread and Cruse, this was not a case of a new group starting up which would move on when well established. The Quaker group in Barnstaple had grown too large for its premises there, and had decided to split and form a new group at South Molton. Members came from a wide area to attend meetings. The group is a member of the South Molton Council of Churches.

The project committee discussed the advisability of allowing such religious groups to use the Centre, and decided that the Centre should be as flexible as possible on this point, while the local liaison group or the new Centre committee should work out priorities for the use of the premises.

4.15 Community Council of Devon

John Usmar, the Director of the Community Council of Devon, Administrative Secretary of Devon Association of Parish Councils, and a member of the project committee, held a surgery at the Centre in May 1982 with another planned for April 1983. These surgeries allow parish councillors and clerks, and all those interested or involved in the many fields in which the Council is engaged, to drop in to discuss problems or glean information and advice for rural self-help and initiatives. The surgery was advertised in the broadsheet, and held on market day morning (Thursday). Four useful contacts were made which might well not have been made by other means. The Centre has benefitted in many other ways from the Community Council.

5 The Information Centre

One of the main objectives of Phase IV was to develop the management of the Information Centre by a local steering committee and a part-time co-ordinator to form the basis for the post-project phase.

5.1 The development of the Centre's management structure

5.1.1 Local liaison group

As recommended in the report on Phases I to III, the local liaison group began to assume a more active role, and became by the end of Phase IV an effective steering committee for the general management of the Centre, although it retained the title of local liaison group throughout as a conscious preference. (Local liaison group members are listed in Appendix 14.)

In March 1982 the group had considered possible future management developments towards independent charitable status by inviting a local bank manager, accountant and solicitor to advise the Centre. While welcome to attend meetings of the group, the advisers were kept informed of developments through the broadsheet and the local liaison group's minutes. As different styles of management emerged in Phase IV, the skills of these advisers were not called upon, but it is envisaged that some or all of them will be invited to continue their standby role during the post-project phase.

In March 1982, the local County Councillor, who now held monthly surgeries at the Centre, was invited to join the group. Problems of distance made it impracticable for the other agencies using the Centre to join the local liaison group and help to manage the Centre. Of the societies using the Centre, only the South Molton Archive was a member of the group; this reflects the Archive's longstanding association with the Centre and its information gathering and disseminating role. The local liaison group had already acquired an effective chairman, Mr David Verney, in October 1981; with the help of the Dartington North Devon Trust's liaison scheme for making use of the skills of retired people, the Centre was fortunate to gain the voluntary assistance of a retired person, Mrs Margaret Walker, as secretary to the Centre, in April 1982. During

Phase IV she took minutes for the local liaison group and undertook almost all the typing for both the group and the co-ordinator.

In February, in view of the rapid changes likely to occur during 1982, a sub-committee of five members of the local liaison group was nominated to provide accessible advice for the co-ordinator between full meetings of the group.

5.1.2 Development of an independent structure for the Centre

During Phase IV, the local liaison group discussed problems of timing in pressing home applications for funding the Centre after March 1983, and evaluated the use made of the Centre's facilities. It became clear that the group's role after the end of the project, and the consequent demise of the project committee, needed to be defined. To avoid the confines of a formal constitution, which might restrict natural growth and development, it was agreed by both the project committee and the local liaison group that the future management structure of the Centre should be defined in terms of reference (see Appendix 13). Applications for funding for 1983/84 had been made on the Centre's behalf to the county, district, town and parish councils by the county librarian, with the help of members of the local liaison group. By March 1983, two options were available:

— Devon Library Services could continue to shepherd the Centre as a whole; or

— the Centre could become an independent body, registered as a charity.

The latter would involve a great deal of back-up and research, and would deprive the Centre of the security and continuity it had enjoyed under the project and would continue to enjoy under the umbrella of the county council. While not ruling out future development as an independent charity, it was agreed to recommend that Devon Library Services be responsible for the overall management of the Centre on behalf of the county council. The county council's overall responsibility for the Centre would lend more weight to applications for grants, and to liaison with other organisations. At a local level, the Centre committee could draw on a wide range of opinion for advice, while remaining as flexible to changing conditions and needs as the local liaison group had proved to be, although the ultimate control of the county council would still apply. It is a measure of how smoothly this arrangement had worked over the previous three years that the group was happy to continue on this basis.

5.1.3 Project committee

The project committee continued to meet regularly to guide the Centre and the project as a whole towards a future independent of its support. During Phase IV, the committee also undertook the planning of the national conference held in October 1982 to disseminate the results of the first two years of the project. As a future co-ordinator of the Centre, the South Molton librarian replaced the project officer on the committee at the end of Phase III, in March 1982. The Area Librarian (North) who was already a member of the local liaison group, also joined the project committee since the Centre is within his area of responsibility. Mr Nick Moore joined Mrs Helene Curtis on the committee as an additional project consultant.

5.1.4 Terms of reference

The terms of reference proposed for the Centre after March 1983 were worked out by the project committee and local liaison group during February and March 1982, and are set out in Appendix 13.

The overall responsibility for the Centre was now shared by Devon Library Services and a new Centre committee. Funding for the Centre as a whole and its co-ordinator were taken over from the British Library, and maintenance of the premises continued to be guaranteed, the only change being that phone calls made by organisations on the Centre's own telephone lines would be charged to the agency, although the rental would be paid by Devon Library Services.

5.1.5 Centre Committee

With the loss of the project committee, and increasing use of the Centre by local organisations, it was felt that the existing local liaison group would not represent a wide enough spectrum of local opinion from inside and outside the Centre itself. The group would therefore be expanded into a Centre committee of up to 23 members, to meet quarterly (this being considered a reasonable frequency for a group of this size). (Its composition and functions are set out in Appendix 13.)

The committee's responsibility for financial matters related only to local projects such as the newsletter and accommodation guide. As the county librarian is responsible to the council for the running of the Centre, Devon Library Services has assumed responsibility for funding the Centre as a whole and therefore making application for financial aid for the financial year 1983/84.

To cope with everyday matters, a sub-committee of seven (the officers of the Centre committee plus two representatives of user agencies and one of the county librarian) was set up (see Appendix 13). There was some discussion over the number and balance of representatives on the sub-committee; the agreed mix will be tested in the year 1983/84, and any necessary change can be made at the next annual general meeting, subject to the approval of the county council.

5.2 Role of the co-ordinator

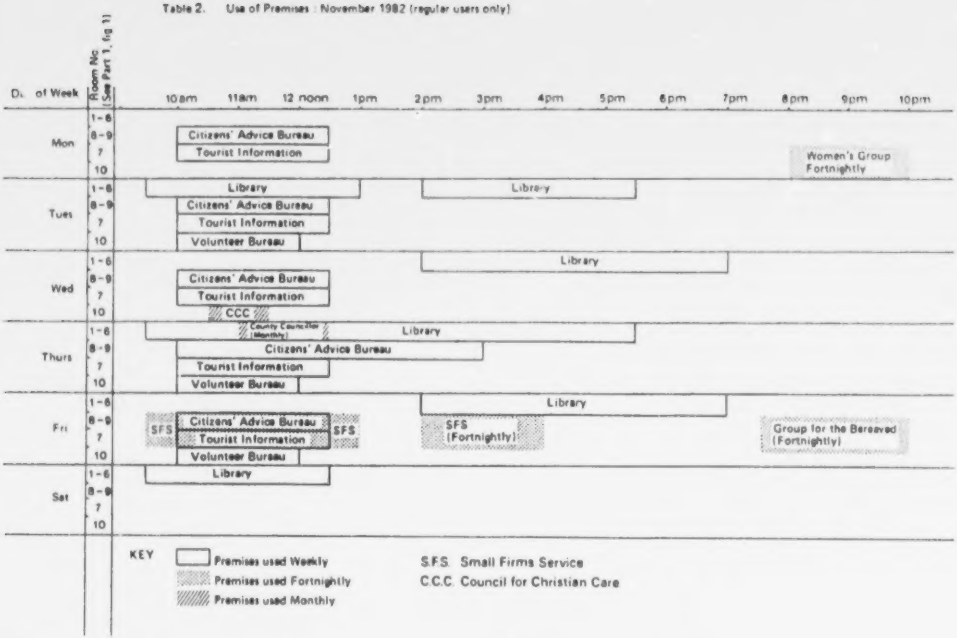
One of the main objectives of Phase IV was to clarify the role of the co-ordinator of the Centre and to quantify the tasks involved. At first styled "manager", the job was soon found to involve more than just the day-to-day running of the Centre, its village representative network, and broadsheet. The first task was to maintain and develop the contacts made during Phases I to III of the project, and to extend these to embrace the overall interests of the Centre. The role of manager developed into that of co-ordinator with the following identified tasks:

- day-to-day management and internal liaison (21% of the time)
- liaison with organisations outside the Centre (9%)
- servicing the local liaison group and project committee (6%)
- tourist information management (18%)
- publicity for the Centre as a whole (4%)
- editing the broadsheet (15%)
- developing the village representative network (22%)
- maintaining the library's links as an agency within the Centre (5%)

5.2.1 Day-to-day management and internal liaison

The basic tasks of ensuring adequate maintenance, cleaning, heating and lighting for the premises were a simple extension of the branch librarian's normal work, as were ensuring the security of the building, and adherence to advertised opening hours. Since the latter two items rely heavily on the co-operation of all the agencies using the building, they have been written into the terms of reference of the Centre (see Appendix 13). Allocation of rooms was also a task of the co-ordinator. The patterns of use changed over the year to meet the needs of the new agencies and their clients. The current pattern is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Use of Premises : November 1982 (regular users only)



Pressure on space arose on the first Thursday morning of each month, when the County Councillor used the downstairs interview room (designed for use by clients of any agency who cannnot manage the stairs, and used also as a book store), and on Friday mornings until January 1983, when the Small Firms Service, CAB, and Volunteer Bureau were all open at the same time. When the Volunteer Bureau changed its opening hours for unconnected reasons in March 1983 this particular problem was resolved.

Liaison between the staffs of all the organisations was vital to the well-being of the Centre and its smooth running. As all the staff, both paid and voluntary, were only in the building part-time, some never met all their colleagues; a constant watch had to be kept for breaks in personal communication. Various methods were considered:

— An internal news-sheet which would ensure that Centre workers learned of each other's concerns and kept abreast of changes. This was rejected as time-consuming to compile, bureaucratic and impersonal.

— Joint meetings of especially CAB, Volunteer Bureau, and library staff and village representatives, either socially or formally. This idea had been put into practice, with workers and representatives being invited variously to agencies' parties, community lunchtime discussions, and village representative meetings, and by circulation of local liaison group minutes to village representatives and the library staff.

— Formal opportunities for updating workers in the Centre were taken up with the idea of developing opportunities for exchanging ideas outside local liaison group meetings. The co-ordinator now attends CAB monthly workers' meetings to relay any news of developments elsewhere in the Centre, to be kept informed of CAB concerns, and to discuss new ideas. Confidentiality is preserved by confining this exchange to the first part of the workers' meetings, after which the co-ordinator leaves. Similarly, the co-ordinator was invited to join the Volunteer Bureau committee. Wishing to leave the Centre's agencies completely free to conduct their own affairs within the Centre, this invitation was declined, although the co-ordinator does attend committee meetings as a non-voting member to encourage the exchange of news and views.

Increasing contact between all the agencies fostered a team spirit of

mutual support that allowed all concerned to react with flexibility to ever-changing circumstances, and enabled difficulties and potential conflicts to be sorted out early and amicably. This was considered to be so vital to the success of the Centre that it was written into the Centre's terms of reference.

5.2.2 Liaison with organisations outside the Centre

The Centre continued to build up links with other local organisations, both through its member agencies and through the co-ordinator who (in consultation with the relevant agencies) dealt with matters of concern to the Centre as a whole. The village representatives' network was expanded to cover all but one of the parishes within the project area. Accommodation providers, tourist attraction owners, and local business people were drawn into the Centre's orbit by their contributions to the accommodation guide, tourist attraction leaflet, and broadsheet. Existing links with local voluntary organisations and statutory organisations were strengthened and new ones made; evidence of many of these was found in contributions to the broadsheet. The development of these links is described in Part II, Section 7.

5.2.3 Servicing the local liaison group and project committee

Servicing the local liaison group was largely taken over in April 1982 by the newly appointed voluntary secretary who took and typed the minutes ready for circulation by the co-ordinator, who remained responsible for agendas. The project committee was serviced jointly by the co-ordinator, the project head, and library headquarters staff.

5.2.4 Tourist information

The tourist information point continued as an "in-house" service under the immediate control of the co-ordinator. With staffing from the CAB and the Volunteer Bureau and other volunteers, the point ran itself during the summer season (July and August) of 1982. The main tasks for the co-ordinator were:

— editing of the accommodation guides and tourist attraction leaflet, and their advertising and distribution (considerable help was given by library headquarters staff with the latter);

— acquisition and display of tourist literature and information.

The latter was facilitated by a leaflet exchange organised by the West Country Tourist Board in Exeter each spring, and attended by representatives of tourist information centres and attractions from Wiltshire to Cornwall.

5.2.5 Publicity for the Centre as a whole

Responsibility for publicity during Phase IV fell naturally into two parts. The project head tended to deal with national and county-wide publicity, such as general press articles and press releases, while the co-ordinator maintained contact with the local press and radio, circulated posters, copies of the Centre's own publications, and organised entries in local carnivals and fairs. In April 1983, a new poster was being printed and plans made to produce a leaflet explaining which subject areas are covered by the Centre and its agencies.

5.2.6 Broadsheet

The production of the broadsheet was an unremitting but most satisfying task for the co-ordinator, who acted as its editor, advertising manager, and distributor (see Section 5.3.5). The task can be broken down into the following monthly sections:

— acquiring local financial sponsors;

— assembling copy for two articles, news items and local events diary;

— distributing the printed copies to strategic points around South Molton itself, to the surrounding area (where delivery is largely in the hands of the village representatives), and by post to local councillors, press, and interested organisations.

5.2.7 Village representatives

The network of village representatives had been maintained and new representatives recruited by the co-ordinator. Each representative was visited once a month. Representatives were responsible for the distribution of the broadsheet in their areas, and for acting as a "signpost" to the Centre in their local communities; to this end they were also supplied with minutes of the local liaison group meetings, and were invited to gatherings at the Centre. Several produced lists of organisations in their parishes with the co-ordinator's assistance.

5.3 Finance

One of the objectives of Phase IV was to achieve permanent local funding for the Centre. Three funding principles emerge:

— financial support was to be sought from all three levels of local government, i.e. county, district and parish council;

— this funding would cover the expenses of the Centre as a whole;

— it was the responsibility of each agency to provide for its own running costs.

Negotiations for Centre funding were undertaken by Devon Library Services, an arrangement later confirmed in the terms of reference (Appendix 13). Crucial elements in these negotiations were early identification of appropriate levels of member and officer involvement. Although this process was inevitably time-consuming, effective understanding of interaction between all parties was achieved.

5.3.1 Costs

Costs for Phase IV of the project were met by the British Library and Devon Library Services. The figures given here can be compared with those given for Phases I-III in Part I, Section 4.7.

				£
Research costs — 1982/83				
Total				2,806
Running costs				
Rental		933		
General and water rates		291		
Electricity and gas		257		
Telephones		566		
Postage		65		
				2,112
Special projects				
Project conference:	Hire of rooms	24		
	Reception	32		
	Coach hire	65		
				121
Village representatives (claims for travelling to meetings at the Centre)		5		
			Total	5,044

The broadsheet cost £40 per issue to print (£480 for the year's production in Phase IV), this expenditure being met by sponsorship from local firms.

5.3.2 Budget 1983/84

The budget for the cost of running the Centre in the post-project phase was based on the costs of Phase IV as detailed above.

Estimated running costs — 1983/84	£
Rent, rates, electricity, gas	1,600
Telephone	600
Cleaning	200
Postage and village representatives	100
Total	2,500

5.3.3 Sources of funding 1983/84

The principle of seeking local funding emerged at the beginning of Phase IV and was included in the Centre's terms of reference.

The project committee and local liaison group agreed that funding should be sought from county, district and parish councils since the Centre provided a service at all levels from the general to the most local. Financial support from all levels of local government would also reflect the benefits felt by councils from the Centre and its work. It was essential to establish a relationship with the councils and their officers to ensure that misunderstandings and complications did not arise. Links already existed with the county council, which had been involved in the project from its earliest days through Devon Library Services. Local links with the parish councils (including South Molton Town Council) had developed through the everyday work of the Centre and its agencies. Fewer links had grown up with the North Devon District Council; this lack was compensated for with the help of the North Devon District councillors who were members of the local liaison group. The advice of these and of county and parish councillors in the group was taken to ensure that applications for funding were received by the relevant councils at times convenient to their budget meetings. Opportunities were also made to discuss and explain the need for local funding with members and officers at all levels.

In March 1983, the local liaison group drew up a timetable of applications to councils that would be compatible with the relevant

budget and grant committee meetings. As a first step, a general letter to relevant councils and councillors, summarising the Centre's work and mentioning that British Library funding would end in February 1983, was sent in April 1982.

June 1982	Initial approaches to Director of Finance, North Devon District Council, and the Mayor of South Molton Town Council. Funding discussed by Amenities and Countryside Committee of Devon County Council
June 1982	Request for further information from North Devon District Council
July 1982	Application discussed by South Molton Town Council
August 1982	South Molton Town Council agreed to fund 10% of Centre's costs to a maximum of £250. It requested that support also be sought from the other parish councils in the area as well as North Devon District Council and Devon County Council
November 1982	Formal application to North Devon District Council
December 1982	Applications to parish councils
December 1982-February 1983	Replies from parish councils
March 1983	Grant approved by North Devon District Council
March 1983	Terms of reference, including Devon County Council's responsibility for funding, passed by Amenities and Countryside Commission

These applications were negotiated by the project head and County Librarian according to an informal formula of:

10% of costs from the town and parish councils
40% of costs from the district council
50% of costs from the county council

This proved successful; funding for 1983/84 was received as follows:

North Devon District Council	£ 1,000.00
Bishop's Nympton Parish Council	20.00
Chittlehamholt, Satterleigh and Warkleigh Parish Council	10.00
Chittlehampton Parish Council	10.00
George Nympton Parish Council	5.00
King's Nympton Parish Council	7.50
North Molton Parish Council	25.00
South Molton Town Council	250.00
	£ 1,327.50

The remaining £1,172.50 and staff costs were borne by Devon County Council under the Centre's terms of reference.

All the grants listed above were made on an annual basis and so the time-consuming process of making applications has to be repeated each year. However, the precedent of support for the Information Centre was established in Phase IV.

5.3.4 Future costs and funding

Responsibility for applications for grant aid for 1984/85 lies with Devon Library Services; applications will be made on the basis of a budget drawn up by Devon Library Services and supported by evidence of need and viability drawn from annual reports submitted by the Centre's agencies.

5.3.5 Self-financing ventures

The monthly broadsheet continued to be produced at the rate of 3,000 copies per issue. In April 1982, printing costs rose from £15.00 to £40.00 an issue; typesetting, artwork and proof-reading continued to be done by Devon Library Services. To raise the additional finance, the advertising space available to sponsors was doubled so that two sponsors a month contribute £20.00 each. There was no difficulty in finding support from local firms and organisations; some find it a valuable way to advertise their goods and services, others wish to demonstrate their support for the Centre and for the broadsheet. An increase in production costs is expected which will pose problems (see Part II, Section 8).

The first edition of the accommodation guide appeared in April 1982; it was compiled by the project officer and printed by Devon County Council. The second edition for 1983 was compiled by the co-ordinator

(with the help of South Molton Community College, the Centre secretary, and a small group of local accommodation providers) and printed by a local printer. Each entry in the second guide cost £10.00. With 75 contributors the cost of printing, distribution and initial national advertising was covered (see Part II, Section 8.3).

An experimental tourist attraction leaflet was compiled by the co-ordinator and printed locally, the cost for 5,000 copies (£117.00) being exactly met by contributions from 11 attraction owners. (See Appendix 17.)

Several other items were produced and financed by the project rather than attempting self- or external finance.

6 The Role of the Library

Throughout the whole period of the project, the library has played a key role. It was one of the aims of Phase IV to investigate the most effective way of presenting the library's back-up provision of local information and reference material for the Centre and its clients. The following aspects were considered:

— staff;

— provision of reference materials;

— local information;

— mobile library;

— back-up from Devon Library Services;

— effect of the Centre on the local library.

6.1 Staff

The staff members at the branch library remained the same over the entire project period, and this provided stability and continuity. From October 1981, the vacancy left by the retirement of the mobile librarian was filled by branch staff pending the appointment of a new mobile librarian in March 1982. During Phase IV, the time spent by the branch librarian on co-ordinating the Centre was replaced by the existing branch staff and experienced casually employed assistants. All the staff were kept informed of developments at the Centre, formally through the broadsheet and minutes of the local liaison group, as well as through their day-to-day experience.

6.2 Provision of reference materials

During the first three phases of the project, the branch library improved its community information. By March 1982, this material, in book and pamphlet form, was being held in the reference library, the mobile

library, the rooms used by the CAB and Volunteer Bureau, and in the Centre foyer. The material covered such topics as housing, employment, family and personal matters, welfare and consumer affairs, household finance, education and civil rights, and was designed to assist individuals and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. Its scattered locations made it difficult for Centre staff and clients to know what was available and where to find it. Catalogues of items held were not comprehensive and were rarely consulted. Moreover, material held by the library was particularly difficult to use as it was scattered throughout non-fiction sequences according to the Dewey Decimal Classification.

6.2.1 "Community information" display

After consultation, those items held by the CAB, Volunteer Bureau and in the Centre foyer that had not been found useful, were removed and either withdrawn or reallocated to general library stock. The items remaining in the CAB and Volunteer Bureau were tools that met the specific needs of each agency's staff rather than materials designed for self-help. *Citizens' advice notes* and Berryman's *Magistrates' court guide*, for example, thus remained in the CAB's own collection, but *Women's rights* (Coote and Gill, 1977) was transferred to the library. To bring together the library stock, a six-shelf 2′6″ bay of shelving near the library desk in the non-fiction section was cleared by library staff, within which four racks were installed to display books on a specific topic such as consumer affairs, benefits, family matters, fuel and power, which changed each month. To these books, the CAB added a topical monthly selection of free leaflets on the same subject. A prominent notice directed those browsing through this "community information" display to the other agencies in the Centre for further advice and information. For ease of shelving, the stock was identified with a small blue disc (analogous with the blue circle of the CAB logo), and was kept on the two conventional shelves in the "community information" bay when not itself on display. It was divided into broad categories of finance, housing, consumer, family, jobs, careers and disabled, and was designed for use by individuals wishing to answer their own questions or to clarify their ideas before consulting a specialist agency. New items were added gradually in consultation with agencies in the Centre, especially the CAB. Almost all the items were available for a full four-week loan. Readers were frequently referred by library staff to the other agencies for further information and advice.

The CAB worker-in-charge advised the librarian on additions to the bookstock, where stickers warning of out-of-date figures etc. should be

added, and what should be withdrawn from stock as completely outdated. The fresh display of books and leaflets each month caught the eye, acted as a shop window for the information and advice services available at the Centre, and made material on community information topics more accessible to the public, clients and staff. A similar display was provided on the mobile library.

6.2.2 Reference library

With fewer community information titles, the reference library retained its function as a quick-reference point for everyday information (e.g. rail timetables, *Whitaker's Almanack*), a resource for general information for homework and hobbies (e.g. encyclopaedias, stamp catalogues) and for local information (e.g. local history books and journals, local council publications and minutes). To this traditional collection were added more general directories (e.g. telephone directories for the South-West and London) and a selection of recent trade and commercial directories (e.g. Kompass, Kelly's) which proved particularly useful to the CAB in pursuing consumer enquiries.

6.3 Local information

The provision of up-to-date local information was an important part of the library's contribution to the Centre during the first three phases of the project. One of the main objectives of Phase IV was to produce a local information directory for the use of the Centre, its constituent agencies, and its village representatives.

6.3.1 Directory of essential services

During 1982, the assistant librarian at the area reference library compiled a directory of essential services in North Devon in co-operation with the Community Council of Devon. The directory covered the statutory and main voluntary organisations active in the North Devon District Council area, which includes the project area. It was designed as one of a series for each district council area in Devon, for use by a network of village contacts. These were set up by the Community Council in November 1982 to make the information available to their own communities.

In the South Molton area, the Centre's village representatives were approached in the first instance, and several took on the additional role of village contact and held a copy of the directory. It was also held by the branch and mobile libraries, the CAB, and Volunteer Bureau.

120

6.3.2 Local organisation lists

To bring the directory of essential services down to a really local level, the village representatives were asked to compile lists of contacts for societies and clubs, councillors, clergy and schools in their own parishes. By April 1983, 11 lists had been compiled and circulated within the parishes by their representatives, and to local councillors, the CAB, and branch and mobile libraries. A list for South Molton itself was compiled by the co-ordinator and the assistant reference librarian, Barnstaple, from the local information card index in the branch library, and this has had a similar distribution.

The local organisation lists and the directory of essential services together provide a comprehensive source of contacts for organisations at parish, district and county level. The material has not yet been in use long enough to give any accurate report of its effectiveness. Both the lists and the directory will be updated annually, and those village representatives who have not yet compiled lists for their communities will be encouraged to do so by the co-ordinator.

6.3.3 Internal local information files

The library, CAB, and Volunteer Bureau continued to maintain their own local information files as described in Part I. The problem of circulating updated information recurred. In March 1982 the three organisations agreed to discontinue the circulation of updating slips in favour of periodic revision of files against each other. This system lapsed, and a decision was taken to revert to the slip system which had proved the most effective of all those tried.

6.3.4 Local events diary

The library's local events diary continued to be used as the basis for the diary published each month in the broadsheet. It was kept near the library desk in an eye-catching position, and events were entered by both the library staff and the public; items were accumulated during each month from the public, Centre staff, village representatives, the mobile librarian, the local press and other sources. During Phase IV more and more use was made of the diary with a view to eventual publication of events in the broadsheet; many events were telephoned in from the surrounding area, handed in to the mobile library, or delivered to the library. It was also used by event organisers to ensure that their proposed date did not clash with another event in the neighbourhood.

6.4 Mobile library

From March 1982 until March 1983, the mobile library carried a small selection of community information leaflets, provided by the CAB and changed monthly; books on these topics could also be found in the normal non-fiction sequence. Readers were referred by the mobile librarian to the Centre for further information and advice. The mobile librarian also distributed the broadsheet and acted as an ambassador for the project and the Centre in the rural area. A small display board for leaflets, and a shelf of community information books, were added in March 1983 to allow easier access to this material.

6.5 Back-up from Devon Library Services

Mention has been made throughout the report of the back-up the Centre has received from Devon Library Services. The Community Services Librarian as project head, and the Area Librarian (North), were members of the local liaison group; area and headquarters staff provided help with accounting, duplicating and secretarial skills, with artwork, typesetting and proof-reading for the broadsheet, and with reference and information expertise.

Without this practical help from the rest of the library service (and the moral support it implies), the Centre would not have developed so smoothly. Devon Library Services provided a neutral basis for co-operation which had the advantage of a permanent and acceptable public image both locally and county-wide. Its existing network of community contacts in remote areas, maintained regularly through the mobile libraries, provided valuable feedback throughout the project.

6.6 Effect of the Centre on the local library

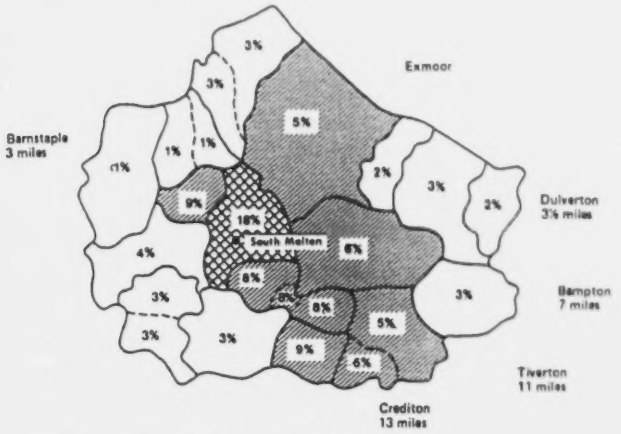
The advantages of being part of the Information Centre for the local library have been summarised in Part I, Section 8. The project enhanced the library's image, and made referral for further advice, information and practical help, easier and more credible. It has also made the library staff more aware of their own role as information providers. They have become more adept at evaluating requests for information and advice, at referring cases to the other agencies in the building and elsewhere. They have also become aware of the need for a depth of knowledge of these agencies on which to base their referrals.

The library continued to provide reference, book lending and extension activities such as the good readers' circle for children. There had been no measurable increase in the number of readers or the volume of books loaned or requests taken in the branch library (figures for the mobile library are confused by changes in issue systems and routes in recent years).

An analysis of requests for information received in the branch library from March 1982 — February 1983 showed a rising trend, allowing for a seasonal peak from July to September caused by enquiries from tourists. A large proportion of these enquiries (47%) related to recreation, sport, hobbies, DIY, travel, history, natural history, and the arts. Fifteen per cent related to local information and local history, 12% were questions about the services offered by the Centre including the library, 10% were about consumer, tax, legal, employment, commercial and social matters, and 9% were tourist enquiries. Of the 1,426 enquiries received over the year, 79 came from outside the project area, and 410 from visitors or those whose addresses were unknown. Of the remainder, two-thirds came from South Molton itself. Map 5 shows the distribution of the source of enquiries expressed as a percentage of parish population; and shows also the strong influence of isolation. The nearer the library is, the more likely it is to be used as a source of information, even if there is also a mobile library service available. Swimbridge and East and West Buckland showed low figures, probably reflecting the attraction of Barnstaple (five miles from Swimbridge itself).

Map 5

Source of enquiries received at South Molton branch library, March 1982 - February 1983 : parishes within the Project Area



Number of enquiries expressed as a percentage of parish population

- >10%
- 10–5%
- <5%

excludes specific requests for authors or titles.

7 The Centre and its Community

The Centre exists to meet the needs of its community for advice and information. The ways it has attempted to do this during Phase IV through its constituent organisations have been described; its contacts with local statutory and voluntary organisations, as an entity in its own right, are now considered. During the project, the Centre grew into an integrated whole with an image projected locally by all its agencies and its co-ordinator through their daily contact with the community, and by its publications. During the first three phases of the project, two surveys were conducted: the first to assess the need for information and advice services in the South Molton area, and the second to review the effectiveness of the Centre subsequently set up. It was considered too soon to undertake another during Phase IV, although it was acknowledged that such a general survey might be necessary at some future date. An informal questionnaire survey was conducted among the Centre's village representatives at the end of Phase IV to assess their opinion of the Centre's usefulness to their communities around South Molton (see Section 7.3.1).

7.1 Contact with local statutory bodies

The Centre established links with local authorities at parish, district and county level, and with local offices of central government departments. Building on the contacts made during the project's first three phases and those made by the Centre's own agencies, these links were strengthened over the year of Phase IV.

7.1.1 Parish councils

Contact with parish councillors in the surrounding county was largely in the hands of the village representatives, some of whom stressed the need for the Centre to develop closer links with their parish council. These were formally represented on the local liaison group by a representative of the North Devon area of the Federation of Parish Councils. However, while direct links were made with the South Molton Town Council (which is South Molton's parish council), few were made with the rural parish councils. Those parishes nearest to South Molton had the most contact with the Centre and were thus best informed about its work. It is perhaps because of this that the parishes of South Molton, North Molton,

Bishop's Nympton, Chittlehampton, George Nympton and Queen's Nympton, King's Nympton and Chittlehamholt, Satterleigh and Warkleigh, generously responded to the Centre's request for funding in the post-project phase.

South Molton Town Council supported the Centre from the inception of the project in 1979. The Town Clerk liaised closely with the tourist information point at the Centre on the distribution of tourist literature to enquirers, and provided information on events to be held in the council's Assembly Rooms for the Centre's broadsheet. He also distributed the broadsheet to councillors. The council was represented on the Centre's local liaison group; its help and enthusiasm greatly contributed to the success of the national conference held in the Assembly Rooms in October 1982.

7.1.2 North Devon District Council

The Association of District Councils' paper *Rural recovery: strategy for survival* (ADC) highlights the problems of councils providing services to rural areas; Rural Voice's report *State of the countryside 1982* (Rural Voice, 1982) sees these problems as intensifying. The Centre was concerned to establish links with the district and county services to assist in overcoming problems, especially those caused by poor communications in an area of scattered rural population. The North Devon District Council supported the Centre from the start of the project and has given financial help for the post-project phase, and hospitality at the national conference. Local councillors, two of whom represent the Council on the local liaison group, were also kept informed of the Centre's development via the broadsheet, as were the Council's offices in South Molton and at the Civic Centre in Barnstaple.

7.1.3 Devon County Council

Leaving aside the Council's sponsorship of the project, and continuing support for the Centre through the medium of the library services, the Centre benefitted greatly from the advice and support of the local County Councillor who held a monthly surgery at the Centre and helped to inform the local community about the Centre.

The council's careers service has the facility, as yet unused, to use the Centre for appointments. The careers officer works closely with South Molton Comprehensive School and South Molton Youth Club, and was content to await evidence of popular demand for any extension of his activities to the Centre. The service was kept informed of the Centre's

affairs via the broadsheet, but did not take advantage of invitations to use this means to advertise itself. Notices of the service's various offices (including the Centre) were distributed to all the village representatives, but with no direct results.

South Molton School and Community College had good contacts with the local library and Volunteer Bureau before the project began. Building on existing links, liaison with the School and Community College was close. The school's Senior Mistress informed the Centre's organisations, and others, of the activities of her "community responsibility" group of children at a community lunch held at the Centre in July 1982. As a result, the Volunteer Bureau and the CAB developed their own existing contacts with the school. The broadsheet was used to advise pensioners of a scheme to install security locks, which the school was running in conjunction with the police. The Adult Tutor at the Community College has used the broadsheet on a number of occasions to advertise evening classes and a special "drop-in" day centre for the unemployed. The co-ordinator also helped with the distribution of evening class brochures to the surrounding villages.

Other statutory organisations with which the Centre as a whole was in touch, via the broadsheet, were South Molton Health Centre and Cottage Hospital, post offices throughout the project area, and the police.

7.1.4 Central government

Contact has been made with central government through two departments: the Manpower Services Commission (through the local Job Centre), and the Department of Industry (through the Small Firms Service). Discussions with the Job Centre serving the South Molton area (which is in Barnstaple, 12 miles away) concerned the provision of details of vacancies in the Centre to allow local people to see what jobs were available. Similar schemes were operated in other parts of Devon, and several clients of the Centre and local organisations have expressed a need for such a service. To date (April 1983) no such development has come to the Centre, for two reasons: first, the relatively low level of both unemployment and vacancies in the South Molton area, compared with the industrial centres of Bideford and Barnstaple, and the unemployment blackspot of Ilfracombe; and secondly, because the Job Centre foresaw insuperable obstacles to keeping job vacancy information up-to-date. The Job Centre has not yet taken up invitations to make use of the broadsheet, through which it is kept informed of the Centre's activities.

7.2 Contact with local voluntary organisations

The compilation of local organisation lists for many of the parishes in the project area, and for South Molton itself, revealed the several hundred societies and clubs active in the area. The Centre had direct contacts with relatively few; most of these were made through the use of the broadsheet to advertise events planned by such organisations.

Apart from those which were actively involved in the Centre itself (the Archive, CAB, Community Council, Council for Christian Care, Cruse, Gingerbread, Marriage Guidance Council, Quakers, Volunteer Bureau and Women's Group), several organisations made use of the Centre's premises or of the broadsheet during Phase IV (see Table 3).

Organisation	Attended meeting at Centre	Used premises for own meeting	Article in broadsheet (300 words)	Item in broadsheet news column
Area organisations				
Dartington North Devon Trust	—	Dec 82	Feb 82	May 82/Oct 82
Devon Twinning Society	—	—	Apr 82	—
Samaritans	—	—	Sep 82	Apr 82
Women's Institute	—	—	May 82	—
South Molton area organisations				
Abbeyfield Society	July 82 Jan 83	—	Apr 82	July 82
Amory House (Day Centre)	July 82	—	—	—
Cancer Research	Jan 83	—	—	—
Computer Club	—	—	—	July 82
Chulmleigh Local History Society	—	—	Oct 82	—
Flower Club	Jan 83	—	—	—
Friends of South Molton School and Community College	—	—	Mar 82	Feb 83
Lions Club	July 82	—	—	—
Molland Amateur Dramatic Society	—	—	—	Apr 83
Mothers' Union	—	—	July 82	—
Rotary, Rotaract, Inner Wheel, Probus	July 82 Jan 83	— —	— Aug 82	— —
Round Table	Jan 83	—	—	—
St John's Ambulance Assoc	—	May 82	—	July 82
South Molton Bowling Club	—	—	—	Apr 82
South Molton Hospital League of Friends	July 82 Jan 83	— —	— Feb 83	— —
South Molton Girl Guides	July 82 — Jan 83	Aug 82 — Jan 83	June 82 Sep 82 Feb 83	— — —
South Molton Group of Churches	Dec 82	—	—	—
South Molton Museum	—	—	—	Feb 83
South Molton Playgroup	—	—	May 82	—
South Molton Scouts	—	—	—	Nov 82
South Molton Twinning Association	Jan 83	—	—	—
South Molton Women's Institute	Dec 82	—	—	—

Table 3. Use made of broadsheet by local voluntary organisations February 1982—April 1983

Organisations making use of the broadsheet were those with an appeal to a large proportion of the project area throughout which the broadsheet was distributed; clubs and societies serving single communities outside South Molton itself did not wish to use the broadsheet for articles on their activities. As the final year of the project progressed, the broadsheet was used more and more for advertising events, to attract people from neighbouring parishes.

The Centre continued to liaise with the Dartington Trust, especially its north Devon off-shoot, Dartington North Devon Trust, whose "Liaison" scheme, for using the skills of retired people, and self-employed advisory service were the subject of a community lunch in December 1982. Contact was also maintained with the independent Community Information Bureau at Minehead, Somerset, and its nearest local representative who operates a branch office in nearby Dulverton.

The Centre was also involved in local community events in South Molton. A community lunch meeting, held in July 1982, discussed the plans of various fund-raising charities in the area; a strong plea was made by Rotary for a second revival of South Molton's traditional Olde English Fayre; a follow-up meeting in January 1983 provided an opportunity for local organisations to discuss the type and timing of events planned for 1983, and thus avoid clashes of interest. The Centre took part in the annual South Molton Carnival for a third year in September 1982, and plans to participate in the Olde English Fayre in June 1983.

Local voluntary organisations' use of the Centre is a measure of their support for it. In an area with a strong community spirit, the Centre became more accepted as a part of the local scene. Without the help and advice of local organisations, the Centre would find it much more difficult to react to local opinion and concerns.

7.3 Village representatives

The village representatives are, with the mobile library, the Centre's main contact with the country parishes in the project area. Their role of promoting the Centre by distributing the broadsheet, referring those seeking advice to the appropriate agency, and informing the Centre of their communities' needs, has continued unchanged during Phase IV. Efforts were made to provide all representatives with the information needed to fulfil their role, and to ensure that there was at least one village representative in each parish. From March 1982, the representatives received copies of the minutes of the local liaison group meetings,

so that they were aware of current developments and the Centre's future plans.

During Phase IV, lists of local organisations were drawn up by the representatives for 11 of the 20 parishes with village representatives; these were photocopied by the Centre and then distributed to interested individuals and organisations. These lists, and the one produced by the Centre for South Molton itself, complement the directory of essential services held by those village representatives who are also village contacts. The original network of 13 representatives was expanded after March 1982; with 21 representatives, only one parish remained outside the network — the parish council of Satterleigh, Warkleigh and Chittlehamholt considered that it was in close enough contact with South Molton to rule out the need for a village representative.

7.3.1 Village representatives' questionnaire

At the end of Phase IV, 13 of the village representatives were contacted to determine how they thought the role of village representative had developed and should develop in the future. Almost all the interviews were conducted over the telephone, the representatives having been warned by letter of the main questions to be raised. This enabled the questionnaire to be answered quickly and easily, and allowed the co-ordinator, who conducted all the interviews, to probe and prompt as necessary. The questionnaire on which the interviews were based is given in Appendix 16.

In general, representatives found that the Centre had provided useful information to their communities. They were enthusiastic about the broadsheet in particular, but were less clear how useful their communities had found the advice services, several making the point that feedback from those using the Centre was not available — or indeed to be expected. Of the other services provided by the Centre, only two cited the practical help available from the Volunteer Bureau in the form of transport for medical purposes. Some answered in general terms that the knowledge that the Centre and its services were there, should need arise, was a "comfort", that the Centre put people into contact with one another, had "put us [i.e. her community] on the map", and "knitted the place [i.e. the South Molton area] together". Asked for comments on how else the Centre could help their communities, one suggested that something should be done for those young people (14-16 year olds) who indulged in petty vandalism. Another, near the Somerset border, suggested that the Centre should liaise more closely with the next town, Dulverton. One commented that the organisations under the Centre's

roof were nicely "gelled together", another that the Centre had already achieved a lot in a short time.

On the whole, representatives did not think that their communities contributed a great deal. They did not rate the provision of events for the broadsheet as a major contribution to the Centre, although several agreed that they provided a great number, nor did they realise how much their opinions expressed over the year had helped the co-ordinator to assess the Centre's progress. One saw her community's greatest contribution as being the provision of personnel to man one of the agencies, another her efforts to ensure that everyone had a copy of the broadsheet. Asked how their communities could improve links with the Centre, several suggested that links between the Centre and their parish council should be improved, others were happy with the existing links.

Opinions on how well informed the village representatives felt about the Centre naturally varied according to how much contact they had with it or with one or more of its agencies, and how long they had been representing the Centre. In fact, this question was so subjective that the answers given often bore little relationship to the knowledge of the Centre revealed in answers to other questions. Asked which method of informing them was the most useful, most cited the broadsheet, although several said that the whole range — broadsheet, local liaison group minutes, literature from the Centre and its organisations, visits from the Centre co-ordinator, and meetings held at the Centre — was useful, as was its regularity. One found meetings particularly useful for comparing notes with other village representatives, another was particularly interested in the local liaison group minutes.

Most of the village representatives interviewed had concentrated on distributing the broadsheet, local organisation list, and leaflets, and agreed that they introduced the Centre into day-to-day conversation.

Answers to questions about visits to the Centre for formal meetings proved rather unreliable. The only clear point was that those actively involved in one of the Centre's organisations were more likely to visit or contact the Centre. Four had not contacted the Centre themselves within the last six months. (Three of the village representatives interviewed used South Molton library at least once a month, for reference use only, nine used the mobile library (of these three used both the branch and mobile library) and four used neither.)

Three village representatives had referred no-one to the Centre in the last six months, on the other hand one claimed 10 to 12 referrals. The number

referred did not seem to bear any relation to the amount of contact the representative had had with the Centre itself, perhaps indicating that the signposting system can work well without such personal knowledge; on the other hand, there was some link between how well informed the village representative felt and how many referrals were made.

The village representatives were unanimous that the broadsheet's content and layout were satisfactory and should not be changed now that its identity had been established. Although some favoured publication and distribution of the broadsheet at the beginning of the month, to most it did not matter when it arrived.

The most popular method of distribution was via shops, post offices, and garages (only three of those interviewed were proprietors), followed by door-to-door delivery, and distribution at meetings; only three put the broadsheet on a noticeboard, several commenting that what went up one day was down the next. Several said that the number they distributed was determined by whether they were partly pre-empted by the delivery from the mobile library. All but two seemed to consider sponsorship of the broadsheet to be the province of "big business".

All of those interviewed were happy with the village representative's role as it existed, and were prepared to continue. Two mentioned the informal representative role played by others involved in the Centre and its agencies who happened to live in their community. One emphasised the value of having a *voluntary* village representative, since "coercion puts people off".

Although the village representative network appeared to be working reasonably well, the need to draw the representatives more closely into the fabric of the Centre was obvious. The broadsheet contributed greatly to the success of the network, as it did to that of the Centre as a whole. There was confusion between the role of the village representative and of the Community Council's village contact, and more generally over the identity and role of the local representative of other organisations such as the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, Devon Emergency Volunteers, etc. Under the terms of reference (Appendix 13), the village representatives will be represented on the Centre committee.

7.4 The community's reaction to the Centre

During Phase IV the Centre, as anticipated by the project committee, became better understood by its potential clients. The grapevine had had

longer in which to spread the word, and the broadsheet proved a valuable means of projecting the Centre over a wide area. Although the criticism — a waste of tax-payers' money — was still heard, many said that it had become an established and well integrated part of the local scene. The use of local firms' services during the conference in October 1982, and for printing the accommodation guides and tourist attraction leaflet, the promotion of local events and societies in the broadsheet, local organisation lists and the Centre's involvement in community events, proved that the Centre belonged to South Molton. A further survey of public opinion would show how far the Centre has been accepted, and how well it answers its community's needs.

8 Publications and Publicity

Publications and publicity went hand in hand during Phase IV. The Centre had relied on its publications — the broadsheet, the accommodation guide, the tourist attraction leaflet, and lists of local organisations — to spread news of the Centre's existence to local people and visitors. They kept its potential clientele informed of developments, while providing them with useful printed information sources. At the same time, the various publications have been used as public relations tools, drawing together the fund of information available locally on events, attractions, accommodation, clubs and societies, into a coherent form; this involved a large proportion of the local population, if only at second hand, in the Centre's activities. This approach was rather oblique — the principle being to publicise the Centre and its activities by providing useful information on the local and national scene, rather than imposing an image of the Centre as "the fount of all knowledge" — which it is not — through conventional advertising. The only exceptions to this approach were advertisements in the national press to promote the accommodation guide to potential visitors (the cost for this is borne by those advertising in the guide), and the local distribution of notices advertising the Centre's opening times, address, and telephone numbers.

8.1 The broadsheet

The development of the broadsheet as a self-financing venture was one of the tasks set for Phase IV. It is compiled and edited by the Centre co-ordinator, and partially financed by local sponsors who purchase advertising space (see Appendix 15). The cost of artwork, typesetting and proof-reading is borne by Devon Library Services. It is expected that the March 1983 printing cost of £40.00 for 30,000 copies will be increased; a similar increase of costs in March 1982 was met by doubling the amount of advertising. The development of the broadsheet to a locally produced and totally self-financing production was considered early in Phase IV. It was decided to leave this transition until the end of the project, both to preserve continuity and to allow Phase IV to concentrate on matters more central to the project. Local reaction to the broadsheet was uniformly enthusiastic, both for the quality of production and for its content and layout. Delivery in the countryside was undertaken by the mobile library and by the Centre's village representatives, and, in South Molton, by the Centre co-ordinator.

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The section which excited most interest was the diary of local events, based on the diary held by the library. This diary was itself compiled from items entered by village representatives, the staff and the public, and culled from the local press and publicity. In the period February 1982 to January 1983, most of the events entered took place in South Molton itself, between a third and a half as many each month took place in the surrounding project area, and the remainder elsewhere in North Devon or Exmoor. Seasonal fluctuations concentrated events at public holidays, especially in spring, and from autumn to Christmas. Most use was made of the news column by the CAB, which had 20 items published between February 1982 and January 1983. The other Centre agencies came a long way behind this figure. The CAB has ready-made monthly press items available, usually featuring a change in law or benefit relevant to the broadsheet's readers, and therefore ideal for inclusion in the news column (see also Table 3 for use of the news column by other organisations). Of the 24 slots available for these articles over the year, eight were used by the Centre or one of its constituent agencies; the rest by other local organisations.

Of the sponsors, 16 came from South Molton, five from the project area, and one from outside (the BBC). Most of the advertising was solicited by the Centre co-ordinator, and reflects the pattern of her contacts rather than any preference for this form of advertising on the part of the advertisers.

8.2 Local organisation lists

These lists were produced for local parishes to provide a local supplement to the directory of essential services in North Devon. They had a limited and very local distribution; the number produced for each parish depending upon the number of organisations in that parish, its population, and the enthusiasm of its village representative. During Phase IV, 12 lists were produced and circulated, including one for South Molton itself. They were compiled by the local village representative who, it is intended, will update them annually. They were also distributed in the country parishes by the village representatives, and copies were also sent to the local County Councillor, the area reference library, and were held by the mobile library, the South Molton library, CAB and Volunteer Bureau.

The list for South Molton itself was given a similar circulation, but copies were also given to each village representative since many South Molton-based organisations draw membership from the surrounding villages. The costs of producing these lists were borne by the project.

8.3 Tourist publicity

The accommodation guide for 1983 closely followed that produced in 1982 as regards format and funding. The decision to produce the second edition was made by the same group of local accommodation providers as had produced the 1982 edition; the work was co-ordinated by the co-ordinator. An invitation to accommodation providers, was sent out in October 1982. Of those contributing entries to the 1982 guide, 28 declined to contribute to the 1983 edition, usually on the grounds that they had had little response to the 1982 edition in the form of bookings during the 1982 season. The remainder contributed updated entries at the same rate (£10.00) as for the 1982 edition, many with great enthusiasm and helpful suggestions for future improvements and developments. There were 27 new entries. Five thousand copies were printed by a local firm and distributed nationwide to tourist information centres and libraries, and in bulk to the Devon Tourist Office for use on its promotional tours, and to West Country tourist information centres and tourist attractions at their annual literature exchange. Advertising in national and regional newspapers again brought in a low but steady number of requests for the guide. The remainder were distributed to local tourist attractions and information centres in North Devon and along the tourist routes to the area via Tiverton, Taunton, and the M5 motorway. Bulk supplies were also given to the Town Clerk for distribution with the town guide, and to local people organising local events such as weddings.

The tourist attraction leaflet resulted from suggestions made during the summer of 1982 by people involved in the accommodation guide who offered other attractions to visitors. Designed by the co-ordinator as a complement to the accommodation guide, all the known attractions in the area were invited to contribute, and owners of 11 attractions did so. Five thousand leaflets were printed by the same local printer who had printed the accommodation guide, of which 2,000 were immediately distributed at the West Country Tourist Board's leaflet exchange, the remainder being distributed with the accommodation guide and to local accommodation providers, pubs, shops, and meeting places along with the broadsheet.

Such has been the demand for this leaflet that a reprint was arranged to allow it to be freely available throughout the main summer season in July and August 1983.

8.4 Press and publicity

The local press were kept informed regularly, through the co-ordinator's personal contacts with local reporters, by press releases relating to major

events (such as the October 1982 conference), and by sending copies of the broadsheet to the papers' main offices. BBC Radio Devon used the broadsheet to advertise its opening in January 1983, and has made regular use of the Centre's material. The Centre's secretary was interviewed on her work for the Centre in January 1983.

The Centre took part, as has become customary, in the South Molton Carnival in September 1982, the float decoration being designed by the mobile librarian and mounted on the mobile library. A presence is also planned at the South Molton Olde English Fayre to be held in June 1983. For such displays, the Centre agencies contribute material and practical help.

Posters advertising the services of the Centre's agencies were distributed with the broadsheet, as was a small poster setting out the Centre's opening hours; a new poster is currently (April 1983) being printed.

In spite of general publicity for the Centre as a whole, and for the individual agencies, and in spite of regular reminders in the broadsheet, it is evident from the experience of the village representatives and the Centre's workers that there was confusion among potential clients about the role and scope of the Centre's agencies, and thus of the Centre itself. To help remedy this situation, it is planned to produce a leaflet setting out who does what, with the aim of clarifying the Centre's existing role and the hope of provoking comment on other areas which might usefully be investigated and developed.

9 Findings and Conclusions

This section intends to identify:

— findings drawn from the experience at South Molton during Phase IV and relevant to the local scene;

— conclusions more generally applicable in a wider context.

9.1 Findings

9.1.1 Resources and finance

The Centre's premises remained virtually unchanged during Phase IV but developing services led to pressure on space (on market days in particular) and thus to some conflict of interest between agencies. Finance for the Centre as a whole was put on a sound footing, after the end of British Library funding, by successful applications for grants from all levels of local government. The agencies remained responsible for funding their own activities.

9.1.2 Management

The local liaison group grew in confidence to develop into an effective steering committee for the Centre as recommended at the end of Phase III. By the end of Phase IV, suggested terms of reference for a Centre committee were drawn up by the project committee and approved by the local liaison group. This committee replaced the local liaison group and the project committee, and provided a wider local basis from which to direct the Centre's future. The role of the co-ordinator developed during Phase IV, the main tasks emerging as day-to-day management of the Centre; liaison with local organisations; production and dissemination of publications and publicity material. Devon Library Services assumed overall responsibility for the Centre.

9.1.3 Development

The Centre's village representative network continued to develop through the common bond of the broadsheet and through the co-operation of local parish councils. There was some confusion between the role of the

representatives and that of the Community Council of Devon's village contacts, and more generally over the identity and roles of local representatives of other organisations. Various directories were developed during Phase IV, and use was made of the directory of essential services compiled by Devon Library Services and the Community Council. The broadsheet was developed as one of the main resources of the Centre with the active support of the local community both in the form of contributions to the text and financial backing by advertisers. In the future, the following areas might be explored for possible extensions of the Centre's work: careers, employment advice, and tourist information. The mobile library service promotes the Centre; this role offers scope for further development. Closer formal links between the Centre committee and the mobile librarian could be beneficial. The branch library staff have become aware of the need for a depth of knowledge of other advice and information oganisations on which to base their referrals of clients.

9.1.4 Co-operation and flexibility

Without the help, advice and participation of local organisations, the Centre would have found it difficult to reflect the community's changing needs and circumstances. Such local support allowed new ventures to be supported, e.g. Gingerbread, Cruse, and tourist information. The Centre and its management responded with flexibility to such external stimuli and organised special meetings to meet special needs or introduce new initiatives. On a day-to-day basis the smooth running of the Centre relied on the co-operation of all the agencies using the building.

9.2 Conclusions

Experience at South Molton has shown what can be achieved through the co-operation of many organisations. This co-operation resulted from careful and co-ordinated initial planning that the Centre should be a joint enterprise from the outset. The co-operation between the organisations represented on the project committee was reflected in the co-operative spirit shown by the agencies in the Centre. The first initiative came in South Molton's case from the library service, and much has been gained in terms of that service's concern for community development and its capacity to make resources available. However, it could well be that elsewhere another organisation might take the initiative and maintain the necessary momentum for a continuing co-operative venture.

9.2.1 Resources and finance

Existing resources in the form of premises and facilities such as furniture were exploited to set up the Centre; additional resources were sought out to meet changing needs. Full use is made of the premises available, each room being used by several agencies at different times. Personnel in all the agencies have adapted to work together in the Centre, and additional voluntary help has been recruited whenever necessary. Existing local organisations have been drawn in to enrich and expand the Centre's role in the community; this has proved to be the main strength of the Centre and encourages it to work with others wherever possible in preference to over-riding existing organisations' areas of interest.

9.2.2 Management

The first consideration at South Molton was the commitment given by staff at all levels of the library service as the sponsoring agency of the project.

During the project, the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the Centre evolved to become clearly defined in the Centre's terms of reference. This clarity helped the co-ordinator to develop her role as a point of contact for all the agencies in the Centre and for other organisations making contact with the Centre as a whole. The means by which contacts within and outside the Centre developed during the project ranged from formal meetings with statutory and voluntary bodies to personal contact with individuals. Throughout the project, a team spirit built up which allowed all concerned to react with flexibility to changing circumstances, enabled difficulties and potential conflicts to be sorted out early and amicably, and developed each agency's sense of responsibility to the Centre as a whole. The work of the local liaison group as it evolved into a management committee for the Centre illustrated this development.

The Centre has developed an apolitical image which welcomes the surgeries of the local County Councillor (Liberal) and Member of Parliament (Conservative). Establishment of such points of principle as this, and priorities for the use of rooms within the premises, were among the main tasks of the co-ordinator and local liaison group during Phase IV.

Setting up the South Molton Information Centre has proved to be a long-term commitment for the enabling organisations. Five years have passed since the project was first conceived, and the Centre remains under the

umbrella of Devon Library Services. By ensuring that the project and its resulting development at the Centre was on a scale appropriate to a small market town, it has been possible to transfer from project to self-management smoothly and without disrupting local affairs.

9.2.3 Promotion

Joint publicity for the Centre and its activities promoted the corporate identity needed at South Molton. The broadsheet, posters and other material circulated locally, and the Centre's participation in local carnivals and fêtes, gave regular and widespread publicity for the Centre and its agencies. Press and radio coverage highlighted new developments. The general principle applied was that continuous publicity at all levels was vital to sustain public interest and awareness.

Information generated by the Centre, especially that available in printed form, was in itself valuable publicity. Such ventures gave practical and public evidence of the Centre's potential, while the help given to individuals promoted the Centre and its agencies at a personal level. Talks to local groups, participation in local carnivals and fêtes had the added advantage of allowing the Centre to identify with its community and being seen to do so.

9.2.4 Co-operation, flexibility and sensitivity

The theme of these conclusions has been co-operation; this demands a flexible attitude and a sensitive approach to problems and opportunities. From South Molton's experience, it was the factor which made the project possible and successful. Such searching for co-operation and a common cause in improving advice and information services in a rural area led the Centre to work with statutory and voluntary agencies both locally and further afield. The South Molton project also owed its success to the help of many other local community organisations which are not primarily involved in the advice and information field but whose concern for their community led them to give advice and interest to the project.

Working with a wide range of organisations and individuals gave the South Molton project a broad and stable base on which to build. Give and take at all levels, from start to finish, allowed the Centre to be set up, develop, and become established. South Molton's experience led to an emphasis on the need for co-operation as a means of exploiting existing resources of community spirit. Projects elsewhere could further develop their community's resources of sound advice, challenging ideas and practical good sense.

Annex 2—The Development of Advice Services in Rural Areas

Elaine Kempson and Nick Moore

There are nearly 2,000 community information and advice centres in Great Britain. Most of them — about 1,500 — offer a general service, providing information and advice on any subject. The best known generalist advice service is provided by the 811 CABx. In addition to these, there are several hundred independent advice centres, or neighbourhood information centres.

Some advice services specialise in a particular area of work or a particular subject. There are, for example, 42 law centres, 58 consumer advice centres, and 159 housing aid or advice centres. These specialist centres frequently build up considerable expertise in their chosen field, and in addition to helping the general public, they are often called upon by the generalist agencies.

A third group of centres concentrates on meeting the information and advice needs of specific groups of people. There are 54 Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL) services which offer a telephone-based service to disabled people. There are also 75 counselling and advisory services for young people.

In addition to these networks, whose primary function is to provide a community information and advice service, there are other networks, notably the public library service, where there is a growing emphasis on community information provision as part of a much wider range of services and responsibilities.

The first advice centres to be opened were the CABx which were established in 1939 to provide an emergency information service during the Second World War. Once the war was over it was clear that the need for such a service still existed and whilst the total numbers of Bureaux fell the overall service continued and was developed to meet new needs.

For about 20 years, the CAB formed the primary community information and advice service. During the late 1960s, however, there was a fairly rapid growth and diversification of advice agencies. Independent advice

centres mushroomed in inner city communities, many of them being part of a wider community project or community centre serving as a base for local self-help groups. The first consumer advice centres specialising in consumer complaints and some pre-shopping and financial advice were opened, and, in 1969, the first two housing advice centres were opened in London.

The 1960s also saw the rapid development of legal advice centres — weekly sessions staffed by a rota of volunteer solicitors and barristers. The first full-time professionally staffed law centre was set up in North Kensington, London, in 1970.

The development of local information services for disabled people has taken place since the late 1970s, as has the main development of public library involvement in community information and advice services.

In the mid-1970s the NCC became concerned that developments might be occurring in a haphazard fashion. It undertook a review of information and advice provision in Great Britain which was published in 1977 as *The fourth right of citizenship* (NCC, 1977). This was complemented by a detailed investigation carried out by the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) of the situation in Scotland published as *Let the people know* (SCC, 1977).

What both these reports showed was that whilst there had been a considerable growth and diversification in community information and advice services there were still large parts of the country with scant provision or no provision at all. In the main these were the rural areas. At the same time there were two research projects, in the Coquetdale area of Northumberland and in Lincolnshire, which showed that the needs for advice and information services were as great in the rural areas as in the more urban areas.

David Clark and colleagues at Lanchester Polytechnic studied five rural parishes in North Lincolnshire and found that nearly half the people they interviewed had needed information during the preceding six months (Clark and Unwin, 1980). The study of information needs in Upper Coquetdale in rural Northumberland (Richards, 1978) showed that over half (97) of the 167 households studied had been faced with a problem in the previous few months. It showed that the main problems faced by rural dwellers are, as in cities and towns, to do with housing, income maintenance and consumer rights. These problems were frequently of a long-standing and complex nature, with a total of 422 problems being identified in 97 households.

There are, however, additional problems for people living in rural areas. Centralisation of local and central government services has accelerated since the 1974 local government reorganisation. It is not uncommon for someone living in a rural community to have to travel 15-20 miles to the nearest social security office; a claimant's welfare benefit tribunal appeal can be held up to 100 miles away from his home and, despite increasing unemployment, there may be no access to a Job Centre. Declining public transport services, coupled with the spiralling costs of those that remain, mean that many people are unable to make the long journeys necessary to seek a solution to their problems whether it be to find employment, sort out welfare benefit problems, or to obtain redress for faulty goods or poor service.

As a consequence, the NCC and the then NCSS (now National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)) jointly sponsored a review of rural advice needs and developments. The resulting report, *The right to know* (NCC/NCSS, 1978), has proved the most important landmark in the development of rural advice services. The research officer was Helene Curtis, who was subsequently to become the consultant for the South Molton Community Information Project (see Annex 1). She succeeded in collecting together for the first time details of, if not all then certainly a large proportion of, innovative local rural advice and information services. The report makes some extremely valuable recommendations for the future development of services. It concludes that "provision and promotion of information and advice in rural areas should be the joint responsibility of rural community councils, CABx and local authorities". It goes on to suggest that the contribution of local authorities should be the provision of "funds, premises and practical help from their specialist departments". This recommendation came at the time that Devon Library Services was reappraising its role in relation to the supply of community information, and was to become the cornerstone of developments in South Molton and in Devon as a whole.

The right to know could not, however, hope to include details of all the schemes identified by the research officer. These included mobile advice centres, village contact schemes, telephone and freepost services, as well as peripatetic advice workers and part-time static advice centres. In many cases evaluation and further research were needed before useful guidelines could be prepared for groups wanting to develop novel rural information and advice services. It was, therefore, a fortunate coincidence that, just as the review of rural advice services was drawing to a close, the British Library funded the establishment of the Community Information Project (CIP), now an independent non-profit-making charity offering an

information consultancy and research service on the development of community information and advice services.

The CIP was offered access to the wealth of data collected during the review of rural advice provision, and was thus able to provide a continuing source of help to groups wanting to establish new services, particularly in rural areas. In addition, CIP was able to undertake some of the detailed evaluation of alternative forms of service delivery that Helene Curtis had identified as being needed.

As more detail has been gathered from these evaluations, it has become increasingly clear that there can be no blueprint for the development of information and advice services to communities in sparsely populated areas. It is possible to draw up practical guidelines on how best to set up a particular type of service. The particular strengths and weaknesses of the different forms of service can also be identified. The choice of the service which best meets local needs, however, can only be made locally.

Mobile advice centres

Over 40 advice centres are known to have been set up, and around 25 of these are still operating. They are run by a wide variety of agencies, including CABx, rural community councils, consumer protection departments, libraries, Age Concern, youth groups, and social services and housing departments. About half of them offer a service in rural areas. A study of mobile services (Kempson, 1981) shows that there are three types:

Mobile advice centres, where the van is equipped as an office, and is used for a regular schedule of visits. Once on-site, the service offered is similar to that offered by a full-time static advice centre. The Gwynedd mobile CAB is a good example. This offers a generalist advice service on a weekly schedule to small towns in the Bangor area of North Wales. Set up in 1973, it is in fact one of the first mobile advice centres.

Mobile advice and community development services, where the van is often equipped as an office, but is used continuously on one site for an extended period. Strathclyde's Welfare Rights Department has a variety of vehicles, including caravans, buses and a Ford Transit van, which are used in this way. The aim of the service is to make contact with people who are not claiming their full entitlement of state benefits. It visits one area for a period of between four and six weeks, possibly visiting two or three sites in the area. The vehicles are used as an office base for the staff,

who offer advice sessions, undertake promotional work on welfare benefit entitlements, and work to set up claimants' unions in each of the areas they visit.

Peripatetic advice services, where advice workers travel to a variety of sites on a regular visiting schedule, taking information and other resources with them. The chief difference from the mobile advice centres is that the vehicle is used as a means of transport only. The actual advice service is offered from a variety of buildings at the sites visited. There is a peripatetic CAB advice service operating in the Meirionnydd area of North Wales and another in East Devon.

Generally speaking, the mobile advice centre model is by far the most common. The main advantage of using a van, as opposed to peripatetic workers, is its conspicuousness and self-advertising qualities. This enables the service to be built up very much more quickly than is possible from an advice centre in a building. Research on Gwynedd mobile showed that self-advertisement (i.e. enquirers who had used or seen the van before who had called in on the off-chance) accounted for 70% of the use made of the service.

The Gwynedd mobile received about 100 enquiries a month or about six enquiries during a two-hour session. The monitoring showed that the mobile was used by about 5% of the potential population, and was found to attract more enquiries per head of population than the peripatetic advice service in Meirionnydd but fewer than the static bureau in Bangor. For most of the sites, 80% of the users of the mobile lived within a two mile radius of the mobile stop. The one exception was a small market town where the van was parked in the market square. Here 80% of the users came from within a six mile radius. In general, it is found that the rate of family and personal enquiries is about half the rate in a static centre, whilst the rate for enquiries on social security is about double. Research on consumer perceptions of the Gwynedd service concluded that the lower levels of privacy afforded by a van do not seem to be a problem. However, the researchers interviewed users of the service only. Had non-users been interviewed also, the result may have been different. In general, the van service was seen as being less "establishment" than an office-based service. Advantages of the service were seen as nearness, impartiality, lack of red tape, and quickness of reply as compared to a government office.

The major disadvantage of both the mobile advice centres and the peripatetic advice services lies in the fact that they are very much part-time. Whilst some services visit on a weekly schedule for a whole or half

day at each site, others operate a fortnightly or monthly schedule of very short stops ranging from half an hour to two hours. Generally speaking, the more frequently and regularly a service is offered the more it is used. The Gwynedd research concluded that for most areas a weekly schedule is necessary, and that stops should be for at least half a day per site. Not only is it easier for users to remember when the service is available, but also a delay of over a week for follow-up work is not generally acceptable. To a degree, the use of brightly coloured mobile advice centres can overcome the problems of a part-time service. The effects are, however, particularly noticeable in the low rate of enquiries of the part-time extension services and peripatetic advice services.

The corollary of this is that, to justify financially a weekly visit of half a day, the catchment area of the community visited needs to be at least 4,000 people. It was for these reasons that the Strathclyde Welfare Rights Service decided to adopt a more aggressive community development approach. Certainly this seems to result in higher levels of enquiry — about 30 enquiries a day on welfare benefits alone. Even on the Isle of Colonsay, with a population of just 139, 20 enquiries were received on the first visit. In two and a half days, 20 of the island's 40 households had been advised to claim benefit, nine for the first time! Similarly, when the benefits bus visited Tiree it was used by 151 of the population of 850 in just four days (Strathclyde Welfare Rights Service, 1980).

The major problem in this approach is ensuring that, when the mobile service moves on to the next site, people still have a source of help available to them. It would be far easier to set up such a service as a benefits take-up campaign, as in Strathclyde, than as a generalist advice centre.

Village contacts

The village contact scheme has been widely adopted as a means of making advice services available to very small and relatively isolated communities. Such services are also known as village link or village representative schemes. Essentially they aim to provide, within a small rural community, an initial point of contact for anyone requiring information or needing advice or assistance. Recent years have seen the gradual closure of village schools and post offices and the loss to communities of the postmaster, headmaster, and even the vicar. Village contact schemes have been seen as a way of substituting for the loss of these traditional sources of help.

There are about 20 such schemes operating at present, the earliest having been set up by the Community Council of Shropshire in 1973. These schemes vary greatly in the number of volunteers who act as village contacts — from under 10 to several hundred. They are also run by a variety of agencies.

Basically, however, they fall into two main types: those, typically based on a rural community council, where the village contact is seen as both a local representative for the sponsoring body and as an information source for the local community, and those, often sponsored by a CAB, where the village contact is seen as a front-line adviser supported by a full-time advice centre. In some instances the primary purrpose of the village contacts is simply to refer enquirers to the relevant source of information.

Experience suggests that the most successful services are those where a wide range of organisations have been involved in their development. Generally speaking, it is usual for the CAB to be involved as well as, in England and Wales, the rural community council or the Council for Voluntary Service. In addition, some local authority departments — libraries, housing, trading standards and social services — as well as local voluntary organisations such as Shelter, the Child Poverty Action Group or Age Concern, may have a useful role to play in setting up and providing practical support to a village contact scheme.

In general, it would seem that village contacts can expect to receive one or two enquiries a month on average. Clearly, the larger the community the greater the potential number of users, but experience shows that the level of enquiries also reflects the style of work of the village contacts. Those who adopt a more active style of work, who are already involved either voluntarily or as a paid worker in some form of community work, and who are prepared to offer enquirers practical assistance rather than referral to an appropriate agency, seem to receive the highest rate of enquiries.

As with all rural advice schemes, enquiries to village contacts reflect the lack of local offices of the statutory services. Whilst many enquiries are relatively straightforward, a large number are more complex and longstanding than those received by static town-based advice centres. Enquiry rates on social security, health, and tax matters are about double the national average for the CAB service.

Research has shown (Kempson, 1982) that few enquirers were referred directly to another agency without the village contact having first attempted to provide assistance. This is true even for services where the

contacts were set up simply as a signposting service. Only about 20% of enquiries were answered with straightforward information. In the majority of cases the contact provided advice and practical assistance. The most successful schemes, such as Northumberland's Rural CAB, recognise this fact. Village contacts are selected using the same criteria as would be used in recruiting a paid advice worker, they receive a comprehensive training programme, are supplied with a regularly updated information service, and have the support of a full-time paid advice worker/co-ordinator.

At the same time, it has been recognised generally that, with only about two enquiries a month, village contacts need other roles if their interest and enthusiasm are to be sustained. These have included:

— acting as good "neighbours" — providing practical help to other villagers;

— providing a feedback of information to the sponsoring organisations, acting as their "eyes and ears" within the village. This type of work is undertaken by the Shropshire village contacts. Examples include notifying the community health council that a particular doctor's surgery has stopped issuing repeat prescriptions to all but personal callers — so causing hardship to a lot of patients living in outlying villages;

— becoming involved in community development work. For example, the Shropshire village contacts have helped a local group to set up a village car scheme by obtaining all relevant information from the rural community council.

The chief advantage of village contact schemes is that the advice service is available all day every day at a realistic cost even for very small communities. However, though simple in concept, a good scheme requires a great deal of planning, support and co-ordination. Of all the options for delivering an advice service to rural areas it is the one requiring the largest amount of back-up administration.

Telephone services

Instead of making advice and information services physically available within rural communities, some organisations have concentrated on making their town-based centres available by telephone to people living some distance away. About 20 telephone-based services exist, the

majority of which operate in rural areas. In addition, there are over 50 DIALs offering an advice service to disabled people and their families.

One of the earliest telephone advice services was set up in 1974 by the trading standards department of Surrey County Council. Enquiries have been handled by two paid advisers, and are serviced by seven telephone lines. Some 85% of the 650 enquiries received each month are resolved during the telephone call by giving advice, but arrangements can be made to follow up enquiries by a special visit to either the consumer or the trader. The telephone service monitored in greatest detail, however, is the freephone service, Adviceline, established in the Highlands of Scotland by the Scottish Consumer Council (Atherton, 1983). The scheme is administered by the Inverness and District CAB, which was already used to receiving a very high proportion (60%) of its enquiries by telephone. The two areas served by Adviceline — Skye and Lochalsh, and Ross and Cromarty — are among the most sparsely populated in the whole of Great Britain.

The monitoring of Adviceline showed that extensive publicity is vital for a successful telephone-based service. The initial month's enquiry rate of 87 tailed off fairly rapidly to about 20 enquiries a month after the first round of publicity had ceased. A renewed bout of publicity a year later temporarily boosted the enquiry rate to 57 a month. There was also a related difficulty in getting people to remember the freephone number to ask for, since publicity leaflets tended to be discarded. If a more memorable number, such as the 999 emergency number, could be arranged it would, of course, overcome this difficulty. The other disadvantage inherent in telephone advice services is the availability of telephones to people living in rural areas. The national average for direct access to a telephone is 72% of the population, but this varies from one part of the country to another, and from one group of the population to another. In some parts of Cambridgeshire, for example, telephone ownership rates are as low as 40%, and a study of DHSS claimants found that only 23% had access to a telephone. The rapid decline in rural telephone boxes will make matters worse still.

Nevertheless, the Adviceline experiment has shown that freephone advice services can represent a cost-effective method of serving rural areas. If based on an existing advice centre, all the money needed for a freephone service goes directly on the advice-giving by telephone, without entailing extra administrative costs. In areas where a high proportion of the population has access to, and is accustomed to using, a telephone, a freephone service has much to commend it.

Local radio

A survey of local radio stations (Hodgkinson, 1982) carried out in 1981 showed that the principle of advice-giving through local radio was well established. All 48 of the local radio stations at that time had produced information and advice programmes and only one was not broadcasting an advice programme at the time of the questionnaire.

The study categorised the 98 regular advice slots into eight different categories.

"— General 'phone-in programmes. Listeners are invited to telephone with enquiries which are then answered on-air by a studio guest who is usually from a generalist advice agency such as a local Citizens' Advice Bureau. A good example here is BBC Radio Newcastle's HOTLINE programme.

"— Specialist 'phone-in programmes. Listeners are encouraged to telephone and seek advice on a problem within a particular subject area. These problems are then answered by an expert (or panel of experts) who work within the subject area. An example of this type of programme is Radio 210's MEDICAL CALL.

"— Mutual aid programmes. Instead of using studio experts these programmes encourage listeners to help each other. Individuals are invited to telephone or to write in with a particular problem which is then given out on-air. Other listeners are then encouraged to contact the station and provide the relevant solution. Sometimes the answer may be given out on-air but more often than not the solution is passed on confidentially. BBC Radio Merseyside's ALAN JACKSON SHOW follows this kind of format.

"— Information slots. Usually five to ten minutes in length, these programmes allow advice agency workers to discuss and present information to the listener on particular issues. These issues may be related to recent enquiries at the advice agency, recent legislation, etc. The only back-up to these programmes is usually the name and address of the participating organisation and encouragement for listeners to contact them in the future. The various SOCIAL ACTION SLOTS on Devon Air Radio are good examples of this kind of approach.

"— Information slots linked to temporary off-air back-up provided by the participating advice agency. On some local radio stations the information slot may give a telephone number which listeners can use if they want to follow up any of the information provided. The telephone number is usually that of a special telephone line made available at the radio station. The advice worker then remains at the station for some time after the on-air slot to deal with any incoming enquiries. These enquiries are dealt with confidentially and off-air. Sometimes they can be answered immediately but in other cases the caller is advised to visit the advice agency for a personal interview. The length of time the worker remains at the station can vary from 30 minutes to several hours, dependent upon the amount of time he/she can spare from normal agency work. BBC Radio London runs one such off-air advice service called TAKE OUT ADVICE. The service is available each afternoon and deals with six advice areas: disability and handicap and mental health (alternate Mondays), visual handicap (Tuesdays), health (Wednesdays), education and careers (Thursdays), and legal (Fridays).

"— On-air slots linked to permanent off-air back-up teams. A few local stations have developed very detailed structures for giving advice to their listeners. In this type of programming, the amount of on-air advice is very limited and advice is mainly provided by a permanent off-air advice team located at the radio station. The service is advertised through on-air announcements during the day, and very often direct feedback is provided to other parts of the station's programming output. Callers to these services may be advised immediately by the back-up team or referred to an appropriate agency which can deal with their particular problems. The main problem with this type of advice service is that it is time-consuming, expensive and may be seen as an intrusion into the work of advice agencies.

"Besides Capital Radio's HELPLINE, other examples of this kind of advice service include Cardiff Broadcasting's ACTION LINE, Severn Sound's CARELINE project and the various Community Service Volunteers' (CSV) projects including CLYDE ACTION, PENNINE ACTION, etc.

"A variation on this type of advice service occurs when a permanent advice team is created to deal with only one subject

or programme. The team is usually funded externally and located away from the radio station while using the station to promote its services. Because these teams are manned by 'specialists' the advice offered may include telephone counselling and some kind of individual support. Two examples of this approach include Capital Radio's JOBMATE scheme and Piccadilly Radio's FAMILY CARELINE.

"— Direct integration between the radio station and the advice agency. Perhaps the most ambitious type of structure developed for advice-giving through local radio is where the advice agency actually shares the same premises as the local radio station and is directly integrated into its programming. In this situation the agency would deal with any information/advice queries coming into the station as a result of its general and specialist programmes. Very few stations have tried this approach, but Capital Radio's JOBFINDER scheme (for the young unemployed) comes close as does Mercia Sound's ACTION LINE with its direct link with the local volunteer bureau.

"— Other. Besides the examples described above there are several other methods of advice-giving linked to local radio that have been tried and that do not fit into the various categories used above. One alternative approach is that employed by Radio Clyde who purchased a Radio Clyde Mobile Information Unit for the Scottish Association of CABx.

"But perhaps the most interesting recent approach is the one being tested by Cardiff CAB and Cardiff Broadcasting (CBC) in conjunction with the ACTION LINE service. The station has obtained the use of a computer to help work out welfare benefit enquiries. Any CBC listener can make an appointment with the station to feed basic information about income, rent and family circumstances into the computer — it will then calculate the suitable benefit and their cash value."

Unfortunately, there is still a need for detailed research into the effectiveness of using local radio to provide advice services in rural areas. A study which monitored a promotional programme broadcast by Ipswich CAB on Radio Orwell gives some encouragement (Booth, 1980). After a slow start, the programme generated a 140% increase in the enquiries received by the bureau from the outlying rural areas. Beyond this, little is known about the relative effectiveness of other types of programme. It is also important to remember that, even with the recent

increase in the number of local radio stations, many rural areas are still not served by one.

Computerised information service

The last two years have seen the introduction and rapid development of computerised information and advice services (Ottley and Kempson, 1982). These have been used to hold general information databases, such as the Prestel System and files of local contacts and organisations. However, the greatest potential lies in the use of computers for personalised information services, and this is also the area of greatest development. Systems are currently in use that not only provide information about a subject — say welfare benefits — but will also calculate an individual's entitlement to those benefits. Other personalised information systems are being developed for tax assessment, debt advice and money management, as well as a range of consumer advice topics. The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs has monitored the use made of nine claimant-operated microcomputers offering personalised welfare benefits information. One of the sites chosen was a social services office in a market town in Somerset, where there is no local Department of Health and Social Security office and no advice centre. The monitoring covered not only the extent of the use of the service, but also the users' reactions to the computerised information system and any obstacles which prevent the users actually claiming the benefits they discover they are entitled to. The results provide a good deal of information and were most encouraging on the potential of computerised information services in rural areas (Epstein, 1984).

Directories

Without a doubt, the production of a local directory of community information and other organisations is the most widely adopted solution to the promotion of advice services in rural areas. The NCC and the LA joined forces in 1982 to publish a booklet promoting such directories and offering guidelines on their compilation.

It is important, however, not to see the publication of a directory as an alternative to offering an advice service in rural areas; the two meet totally different needs. A directory can only be useful where a range of advice services already exists. It is widely recognised that an independent, confidential source of advice is needed in every community, in addition to the statutory agencies such as social services, housing departments,

Inland Revenue, and Department of Health and Social Security. A directory which simply lists the offices of these statutory agencies, though it may be useful, is thus no alternative to any of the other means of providing an advice service to rural areas.

Libraries

While advice agencies were exploring new methods for the delivery of their services to rural communities, libraries were beginning to assess their role in the overall provision of community information services. In 1978, the LA established a working party to examine the potential role for libraries, and to prepare practical guidelines for the development of local services. The report of this working party (LA, 1980) concluded that:

> "The wide variety of agencies offering information and advice and the fact that they are unevenly distributed throughout the country means that libraries must plan their [own] developments in the light of existing local provision. In urban areas the library will probably achieve most by supplementing and complementing the agencies already offering services. In rural areas the library may well be faced with the need to initiate activity. If this is the case it is crucial that the meagre resources are used to best effect. This implies close co-operation with CABx and rural community councils."

The report then continues with practical guidelines on the establishment of local liaison committees; advice services from library premises; professional assistance to local community groups; the promotion of self-help initiatives and the support of local advice agencies through the provision of information bulletins, reference books and publicity displays and exhibitions.

In 1980, when the report was published, few libraries had made a significant contribution to the provision of community information in rural areas. Since that date, by far the majority have developed some involvement. This has included the development of the multi-agency advice service based in South Molton library, which was at the planning stage when the LA report was published. Other libraries have become involved in the development of contact schemes, as in Hertfordshire and Suffolk; of mobile services — in Staffordshire and Derbyshire — as well as providing active practical support for local advice agencies as advocated by the LA working party. Almost all services have been developed in collaboration with other agencies — principally CABx and, in England and Wales, rural community councils.

Co-operation

This theme of collaboration between agencies as a means of developing rural advice services was simultaneously being explored by the NCC. After the publication of *The fourth right of citizenship* (NCC, 1977), the NCC became increasingly concerned about the haphazard development of advice services. It is particularly aware that many areas are very poorly served. The best way to remedy this was to undertake local reviews which would identify existing services and would establish the extent of unmet need.

To test the ideas, NCC initiated two reviews of advice service provision, in Sheffield and Cambridgeshire. These reviews promoted a co-operative approach to advice provision in each area involving both the voluntary and the statutory sectors. They also generated experience which can be applied elsewhere. The lessons learned during the trial reviews are set out in the NCC publication *Who knows?* (NCC, 1982).

The review in Cambridgeshire found that there was extensive unmet need for information and advice services. It also concluded that

> "each information and advice agency is being stretched to the limit and needs more resources to carry out its work. However, if resources could be pooled then it is very likely that they could be made to go further. So the immediate problem is how can information and advice givers most effectively work together to improve provision and to make provision where none exists" (Cambridgeshire, 1980).

The report advocates a close working partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies and concerned individuals and community groups.

An attempt to bring the different bodies together at national level took place in December 1982 with the Rural Advice and Information Conference, to which a wide range of organisations and bodies were invited to send representatives to explore what could be done nationally to improve advice and information services in rural areas.

The extent of the problem was indicated by the results of a survey conducted for the Conference by the Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils and NACAB. This shows that almost four million people live in rural areas which do not have ready access to a CAB, and that 45 district councils do not even have a CAB within their locality. The

provision of specialist services like law centres and housing aid centres is almost non-existent.

In the face of this extremely poor provision, the Conference set up a Rural Advice and Information Committee to sit for a year and to work towards the improvement of information and advice services in rural areas. The Committee drew attention to the magnitude of the problem — the low levels of provision in comparison to the very high level of need. It also explored the funding arrangements for rural advice and information services, and the strengths and weaknesses of the different forms of provision (NCVO, 1984).

There are, however, a number of inescapable conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of the research which has been carried out, and the experience which has been developed over the last 10 years.

The first significant point is that current levels of provision are grossly inadequate. There is a very real need for good information and advice services in rural areas, and that is being met only in a small handful of areas in the country. A major programme of sustained development is required if the need is to be met, and if people, to use the NCC phrase, are to be able to exercise the fourth right of citizenship.

In rural areas in particular, the problem is compounded by the fact that low levels of provision have produced low expectations, and advice services can be provided at minimal cost largely through the use of volunteers. An information and advice service will need to deal with complex problems produced by a complicated social system. To deal with such problems effectively requires well trained staff backed up by detailed and up-to-date information, and supported by sources of specialist help. That is the minimum requirement for an adequate service.

To deliver such a service in a rural area requires additional resources whether they be used to meet the cost of a freephone service, to operate a mobile advice service, or to provide the necessary support services for a village contact scheme. As things stand at present, the development of much-needed services is being hampered by a widespread belief that provision can be made at little or no cost.

Future development

A good deal is now known about the alternative means of delivering services to small and isolated rural communities. The emphasis for both

research and development in the future must be on the nature and level of service that needs to be provided. When rural advice services are compared with their urban counterparts it is clear that there is a disparity in provision. Typically, the urban generalist advice centres are staffed by full-time paid workers who can and do develop a great deal of expertise in tribunal representation, court work, and working with groups. It is very difficult, with current levels of funding, for rural centres to match this expertise. In addition, the generalist advice centres in urban areas will be supported and complemented by a range of specialist advice agencies — housing, consumer, welfare rights and advice services, debt counselling agencies, law centres, as well as advice centres specialising in the needs of particular groups such as disabled people, ethnic minorities, young people, and elderly people. Such agencies are rare in rural areas. Indeed, recent attempts by the Law Centres Federation to establish rural law centres would seem to indicate that, despite enormous amounts of voluntary effort in researching and establishing the need for a law centre, funds are still not forthcoming.

The second main area which needs to be considered is the level of provision necessary to meet the needs of communities. A recent review of the research into use of advice agencies, commissioned by the British Library, concluded that the gaps in our understanding are greater than our knowledge (Kempson and Moore). A substantial programme of work in both rural *and* urban areas is needed to explore further a number of aspects which are vital to the effective development of advice services. These include the location and catchment area of services as well as the effect of hours of opening on use of advice centres and the levels of staffing necessary to provide an adequate level of service.

Even when resources are made available, it is necessary to use them in the most cost-effective way. This requires a flexible approach. It is not possible simply to advocate a single-agency information and advice centre in a focal point such as a market town: the problem is altogether too complex. Furthermore, local conditions will determine the practicality of different methods for taking the service out into the rural areas. What is required is a co-operative approach in which agencies support each other, and build on each other's strengths in order to provide a service which properly meets the needs.

The South Molton Community Information Centre is a good example of what can be achieved through co-operation and flexibility. It is, however, only a beginning. There is still a long way to go before people in rural areas have the level of service which they require and deserve.

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Appendix 1—Summary of Related Research and Initiatives

West Cumbrian Information Project. Amongst its many activities, the Project attempted to meet the information needs of a scattered rural population by means of a mobile "information and action" van. Although valuable, this seemed to be insufficient and the report recommended alternatives for the future, involving an "outstation" (part-time information shop) and a system of local representatives to support the mobile service.

Coquetdale experimental CAB. This was part of a more general project concerned with the information and advice needs of rural Northumberland, jointly funded by NACAB and the Community Council of Northumberland. The solution was a Rural CAB, operating from a central office by means of telephone contacts and a village link network. The research showed that the needs of rural people are similar to those of urban people but are considerably more costly to meet.

Clark and Unwin research. Working from Lanchester Polytechnic, Clark and Unwin have undertaken research into the nature of information needs, especially in the North Lincolnshire area, and have reported extensively on the potential of telecommunications for meeting these needs. This ranges from the use of the telephone alone, to its combination with television and viewdata/teletext facilities. Although speculative at present, this research undoubtedly points the way to important developments in the future.

LA review of Mobile Advice Centres. In *On the road,* Elaine Kempson, from the LA's Community Information Project, has produced a very practical guide to setting up and running a mobile advice centre. Part One looks at "Operation of the Service", "The Van", "Staffing", and "Enquiries and Patterns of Use" supplemented by a discussion of funding and costs. Part Two gives details of a large number of case studies, showing how all these considerations translate into the practice of operating such a service.

Cheshire Information Services. This was set up by Cheshire County Council with the help of district councils to facilitate contact between the public and local government. The main county library input originally was a Central Servicing Unit which collected and distributed to each

office material on statutory and voluntary bodies. This was replaced by a Central Information Unit which developed the service into a wider ranging one, co-ordinating all libraries and information centres throughout the county to provide one comprehensive information service.

Lambeth Umbrella Group. Composed of approximately 35 independent advice-giving agencies, the Group initiated co-operation with Lambeth libraries by requesting a regular information service. The local CAB and Public Relations Department are also involved in the scheme, which involves a monthly bulletin, a leaflet distribution service, and a general exchange of ideas and information. Library staff see this as an extension of their normal reference and information work.

Bretton Library. In the Peterborough area of Cambridgeshire, library staff took the initiative in convening a local information group. Apart from bringing people from different agencies together (often for the first time) this provided a springboard for the establishment of an integrated service of information and advice. Initially this involved four agencies (CAB, Consumer Protection, Careers and Community Health Council) together with the library in a new township, Bretton, developed at Peterborough. Its planning and the early months of operation are described by Judith Bowen in *Design and implementation of a community information service in the library*.

Appendix 2—Information and Advice Agencies in the South Molton Area at the Start of the Project

(a) Generalist agencies serving the general public:

Barnstaple CAB (12 miles)
Crediton CAB (20 miles)
Tiverton CAB (25 miles)
South Molton library
Chulmleigh library (10 miles)
Barnstaple library
Volunteer Bureaux (South Molton and Barnstaple)

(b) Generalist agencies serving specific groups:

Cruse (Barnstaple, 12 miles)
Age Concern (Exeter, 35 miles, but with local representatives)

(c) Specialist agencies serving the general public:

Careers service (Barnstaple, 12 miles, but with South Molton office for interviews)
Community Council (Exeter, 35 miles)
Community Health Council (Barnstaple)
Council for Christian Care (Exeter, but with social worker at Barnstaple)
Environmental Health Department (South Molton)
Health Centres (South Molton, Barnstaple, Crediton and Tiverton)
Housing advice, rent and rates (South Molton)
Marriage Guidance Council (Barnstaple)
Post Office (South Molton and several villages)
Tourist information centres/points (South Molton, Barnstaple and Tiverton)

(d) 24 hour/emergency services

Police (South Molton, part-time; Barnstaple)
Samaritans (Barnstaple)
Social services (Barnstaple)

NB Specialist agencies serving specific groups are too numerous to give a comprehensive list.

Appendix 3—List of Representatives of Local Organisations Invited to a Project Meeting at South Molton Library on 2 February 1979

Councillor D Verney, JP	Chairman
Councillor Wg Cdr E Mortimer	Vice-Chairman Devon County Council Amenities and Countryside Committee
Councillor W G Brown	North Devon District Council
Councillor A E Cook	
Councillor H G Geen	
Councillor L W Govier	
Councillor S G Kingdon	
Councillor J W J Milton	
Dr R L Norris	Mayor of South Molton
Mr M J Lamb	South Molton Town Clerk
Mrs E Sykes	CAB
Mrs L Spiceley	Barnstaple and District CAB
Mr J Usmar	Community Council for Devon
Mr F Foster, OBE	South Molton Volunteer Bureau
Mrs G Halsey	
Lady Stevens	
Samaritans	
Reverend J W Dickinson	Methodist Church
Reverend P B Williamson	
Reverend J Oliver	Vicar of South Molton
Mr H Abbot	South Molton School and Community College
Mr K Strong	South Molton Junior School
Mr G Short	Chairman, South Molton Area Committee of Parish Councils
Mr S F Warren	Parish Councils and Past Town Clerk

Mrs H J McKay	Chamber of Trade
Mr J Mortimer	The Lions Club
Mr A J Symons	South Molton Archive
Mr J P Williams	Rotary Club
Mrs W Squires	South Molton Women's Institute
Mrs W M Elson	Secretary, Bray Valley Group of Women's Institutes
Miss E Holmes	Secretary, Mole Valley Group of Women's Institutes
Mr R G Charlesworth	County Librarian
Mr O A Baker	Principal Assistant Information Services
Mr K Hunt	Area Librarian (North)
Miss S Cotton	South Molton Librarian

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Appendix 4 —First Survey: Questionnaire

SOUTH MOLTON LIBRARY: COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT "20 QUESTIONS"

Please fill in the answers requested, or delete the words which do not apply. (If you have already received and completed one of these, please pass it to a friend)

1. On what subjects have you needed information, advice or help in the past year?
   Examples: education, housing, tax, holidays. .....

2. To which organisations or people have you turned for such help?
   Examples: neighbour, solicitor, councillor, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Volunteer Bureau .....

3. How often do you use South Molton Library? Frequently/occasionally/never
4. Do you use any other library in the area? Yes/no
   If so which? .....
5. How often do you use the mobile library service based on South Molton? Frequently/occasionally/never
6. Do you use another mobile or other service? Yes/no
   Example: school library. How often? If so which? ..... Frequently/occasionally/never

7. Do you have access to a telephone? Yes/no
   If so which? Own 'phone/ neighbour's 'phone/public call box or payphone
8. Do you listen to Morning Sou' West (BBC radio)? Yes/no
9. Do you have a television? Yes/no

10. Do you normally do your weekly shopping in South Molton? Yes/no
11. If not, which town do you visit? .....

12. Do you drive or have access to a vehicle? Yes/no
13. If not, how far are you from the nearest 'bus stop served by a weekly or more frequent service to South Molton? .....

14. Which local newspapers and magazines do you read? (Include parish newsletters and magazines) .....

15. How long have you lived in the South Molton area? .....
16. If you are not a "native" of the area, where did you live before moving here? .....

17. How far do you live from the centre of South Molton? .....

18. Which of the following age groups are you in? (Male) 0-16☐ 17-39☐ 40-64☐ 65+☐
    (Please put a tick in the appropriate box) (Female) 0-16☐ 17-39☐ 40-59☐ 60+☐

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS The following two questions may be left unanswered but if you do choose to answer them, this will be most helpful to us. Please note that ALL RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

19. What is your occupation? .....
20. What is your name and address? .....
    .....
    .....

Please put a tick here if you would like to talk to the Project Officer about any item ☐

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS - PLEASE RETURN THIS LEAFLET TO THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO YOU OR DROP IT IN AT THE LIBRARY AT 1 EAST STREET, SOUTH MOLTON.

June, 1980

David G. Venner
Project Officer

Appendix 5—First Survey: Results

South Holton Library: Community Information Project

DCV 15/10/80

"20 QUESTIONS"

Distribution points and parishes covered

x - W.I.o not covered

	BISHOPS STORTON	BURLINGTON	CHARLES & HIGH BANK	CHITTLEBOROUGH	CHITTLEHAMPTON	EAST ANSTEY	EAST & WEST BOURNEMD	EAST & WEST WORLINGTON	FILLEIGH	GEORGE & QUEEN STRETTON	KINGSTONE	KNOWSTON	MAINSHELLICK/NORMANSLICK	NEWBAY	NORLAND	R. MOLTON & BARNEY HILL	ROSE ASH	SATTERLEIGH & WARKLEIGH	SYDENHAM	TWITCHEN	WEST ANSTEY	WITHERIDGE	TOTAL ROMAL	SOUTH MOLTON	HILL-on-the-MOLE	TOTAL URBAN	Unknown or outside Area	TOTAL	% of Total
NORTH LIBRARY	6	3	3	1	2	9	0	1	1	1	0	7	0	1	5	6	3	0	2	1	5	9	66	2	3	5	17	88	41.5
SOUTH HOLTON LIBRARY	3		2				1									1						1	8	8	0	8	3	19	9.0
SOUTH HOLTON SCHOOL	1		1										1	1		2		2					8	5	0	5	5	18	8.5
BEECH HOUSE/ AMORY HOUSE												1										1	1	10	0	10	3	14	6.6
WOMEN'S INSTITUTES	12	x	2	x	5	x	6	x	1	0	1	x	1	x	0	3	1	x	0	0	x	x	32	4	0	4	5	41	19.3
OTHER ORGANISATIONS											1												1	11	0	11	0	12	5.7
NEWSAGENTS AND CAFE					2						1												3	9	2	11	1	15	7.1
HILL-on-the-MOLE																							0	0	5	5	0	5	2.4
TOTAL	22	3	5	3	10	9	6	2	2	1	1	9	1	3	6	12	4	0	4	1	5	10	119	49	10	59	34	212	
POPULATION	816	448	344	163	737	225	415	261	299	155	339	202	251	116	182	961	268	176	1015	58	162	960	8738	3394	7	3500	7	12250	
% Coverage	2.7	0.6	1.5	1.8	1.4	4.0	1.5	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.3	4.5	0.4	2.6	3.3	1.3	1.5	-	0.4	1.7	3.1	1.2	1.4	1.5	-	1.7	-		1.452

South Molton Library: Community Information Project

DGV 15/10/80

"20 QUESTIONS"

Characteristics of the sample population for each distribution method	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	AGE GROUP				DISTANCE FROM S.MOLTON		Access to car	Own telephone	Use of neighbours or public phone	LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (years)					OCCUPATION							
				0 - 16	17 - 39	40 - 59/64	60/65 & over	½ mile	½ mile				0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 25	over 25 but not native	"native"	retired	housewife	farming	professional	manual	part-time/ unemployed	student/pupil	not known
MOBILE LIBRARY	88	32	56	1	13	22	52	3	85	67	66	17	21	16	17	14	20	33	30	2	5	4	1	1	12
S. MOLTON LIBRARY	19	9	10	0	3	6	10	8	11	12	15	4	6	3	4	4	2	8	4	1	3	2	0	0	1
S. MOLTON SCHOOL	18	5	13	4	8	6	0	7	11	13	13	5	2	2	5	0	8	0	5	0	2	4	0	4	3
BEECH HOUSE/ AMORY HOUSE	14	5	9	0	3	3	8	11	3	4	5	8	3	2	0	2	5	8	0	0	0	5	1	0	0
WOMEN'S INSTITUTES	41	0	41	0	12	13	16	3	38	33	34	6	9	3	12	4	13	9	17	4	8	1	0	0	2
OTHER ORGANISATIONS	12	5	7	0	5	1	6	9	3	10	11	1	5	3	1	1	2	3	3	0	4	1	0	0	1
NEWSAGENTS AND CAFE	15	4	11	0	3	8	4	9	6	12	12	3	2	3	9	0	1	5	5	0	1	1	2	0	1
MILL-on-the-HILL	5	2	3	0	0	0	5	5	0	3	4	1	3	1	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	212	62	150	5	47	59	101	55	157	154	160	45	51	33	49	25	51	71	64	7	23	18	4	5	20
% of Total		30	70	2.5	22.5	27.5	47.5	26	74	72	76	21	24.5	16	23	12	24.5	33.5	30	3	11	8.5	2	2.5	9.5

South Halton Library: Community Information Project

DCV 15/10/80

"20 QUESTIONS"

People/organisations to which respondents turned for help

Questions 1 and 2:
Subjects and sources of information, advice and help.

Subjects on which respondents required information, etc.

	FAMILY/NEIGHBOURS	CORRECTLIGH	SOLICITOR	TAX OFFICE	ACCOUNTANT	COUNCIL OFFICE	CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU	VOLUNTEER BUREAU	S. HALTON LIBRARY	D.H.S.S.	MISCELLANEOUS	TOTAL
CONSUMER AFFAIRS			2			1	4	1			1	9
EDUCATION	6	3				4	1					14
HOBBIES AND RECREATION									9		1	10
HOLIDAYS	3								4			7
HOUSING	4	7	5			4					1	21
LEGAL MATTERS			7		1						1	9
MONEY MATTERS	5	1	4	5	10		3	3	1		1	33
SOCIAL SECURITY AND EMPLOYMENT	1					3				2	1	7
TRANSPORT	1					1			1		1	4
LOCAL INFORMATION	1					1	1		3			6
MISCELLANEOUS											2	2
TOTAL	21	11	18	5	11	14	9	4	18	2	9	122

Note: Approx 2,000 questionnaires circulated in June and July 1980. 212 were returned: of these, 122 answered questions 1 and 2.

"20 QUESTIONS"

	LIBRARY USAGE												NEWSPAPER/MAGAZINE READERSHIP							
	S. Molton Branch			S. Molton Mobile			Other Libraries		Local Dailies and Weeklies										TOTAL PAPERS	Parish Magazines
Distribution Method	F	O	N	F	O	N	Static	Mobile	NDJH	SNG	WMN	WSFP	WT	NDA						
MOBILE LIBRARY	16	6	66	84	2	2	9	5	35	10	2	1	3	3					54	25
S. MOLTON LIBRARY	18	1	0	1	0	18	3	1	15	3	0	1	0	0					18	11
S. MOLTON SCHOOL	3	8	7	3	1	14	1	2	13	5	0	0	0	3					21	5
BEECH HOUSE/ AMORY HOUSE	2	5	7	2	0	12	2	0	4	1	1	0	2	0					8	3
WOMEN'S INSTITUTES	12	9	20	13	7	21	10	3	37	2	2	0	2	0					43	36
OTHER ORGANISATIONS	8	2	2	1	0	11	3	1	11	3	1	0	0	2					17	7
NEWSAGENTS AND CAFE	5	4	6	3	2	10	1	1	13	2	1	0	1	2					19	13
MILL-on-the-MOLE	2	1	2	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0					1	1
TOTAL	66	36	110	110	12	90	30	13	130	36	7	2	8	10					181	99
% of Total	31.7 / 48.1	17.0	51.9	51.9 / 57.6	5.7	42.4	13.7	6.1	60.8	12.3	3.3	0.94	3.8	4.7						46.7

Abbreviations: F = Frequently; O = Occasionally; N = Never;
NDJH = North Devon Journal Herald
SNG = South Molton Gazette
WT = Western Times
WMN = Western Morning News
NDA = North Devon Advertiser
WSFP = West Somerset Free Press

Appendix 6—Information Enquiries Received at Library Counter

7 March to 5 April, 1980.

TOTAL: 103 (99 visits, 4 telephone calls)

Nature of enquiry:

Local information	19	History	7
Recreation/hobbies	17	Consumer matters	4
Library services	14	Tax/insurance/law	4
Travel/geography	12	Adult education	2
Music and the arts	8	Employment	2
Natural history	7	Miscellaneous	7

How dealt with:

Directly by library staff	35
Reference to bookstock	31
Reference to area library	25
Reference to specialist agency	8
Reference to Exeter/Plymouth	4

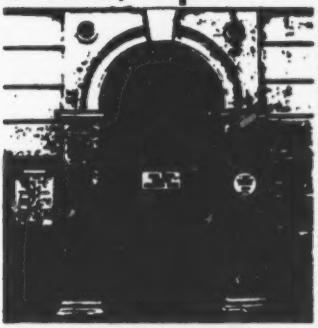
Residence of enquirer:

South Molton	48	East Buckland	2
Bishop's Nympton	8	Filleigh	2
Chittlehampton	5	North Molton	2
King's Nympton	5	Twitchen	2
George Nympton	3	Witheridge	2

Bridge Reeve, East Anstey, Knowstone, Meshaw, Rackenford, West Buckland and West Worlington — 1 each

Other libraries — 4 Visitors — 3 Not known — 10

Appendix 7—News from the South Molton Information Centre, April 1981



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH MOLTON INFORMATION CENTRE

NUMBER THREE APRIL, 1981

SOUTH MOLTON CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU is hoping, in the near future, to extend its opening hours to a daily basis, i.e.

Tuesdays - Fridays from 10.00 - 12.30; Thursdays 10.00 - 3.00
with a possible early evening session on Fridays 5.30 - 8.30

Did you know that the following are just a few of the subjects which your Citizens' Advice Bureau can help you with?

Housing : Social Security : Employment problems :
Redundancy : Consumer queries : Pensions : the Law :
Disablement benefits and aids : Medical treatment :
Higher purchase agreements : the Family : Education.

Each year our laws, rules and regulations become more complex and it is the work of the volunteers in each Citizens' Advice Bureau to do everything they can to find the answers.

No appointment is necessary and it is FREE and completely CONFIDENTIAL!

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR NUMBER - SOUTH MOLTON 2343
and OUR ADDRESS - 1 EAST STREET, SOUTH MOLTON (above the library)

Next month's Front Page Feature: South Molton and District Volunteer Bureau.

INCLUDING

A

DIARY OF LOCAL EVENTS

FOR **APRIL / MAY**

FREE!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THIS BROADSHEET IS PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTH MOLTON COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT

LOCAL EVENTS DIARY

APRIL

1 Concert, S Molton School, 7.30
8 Devon Federation of P T A 's A G M, Chulmleigh School, 7.30
3 S Molton School 30th Birthday Celebrations, 7.30
Pets Show, Chulmleigh School, 7.30
4 Disco, S Molton Assembly Rooms, 8.00
5 Note Cross Jay Fayre, S Molton, 2.00
6.8 1981 cannot be conducted
6 Open Day, S Molton Comprehensive School
Fete on Church Green, Romo Ash Hall, 7.00
8 Church Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms
10 End of School Term
Rotaract Club Car Rally
Spring Ball Cancer Research Campaign, S Molton Assembly Rooms, 8.30
Spring Chirbon Ball, Stage Symphon, Church Hall, 9.00
S Molton S F C Disco and Supper, 8.00
11-18 Great Ash Fayre
13 S S P S Pets Show, Chulmleigh School, 7.30
18 S Molton Choral and Operatic Society Coffee Morning, S Molton Assembly Rooms
17 Good Friday
19 Disco, S Molton Assembly Rooms, 8.00
20 Easter Sunday
20 Dulverton Tenkswords Hunt Ball, Great Dunkland School, 9.30
20-26 Opportunity Centre Easter Holiday Course for Chulmleigh OAP
21-25 The Gondoliers, S Molton School, 7.30
22 Music Drive Georgeham Village Hall, 7.00
Talk by Exmoor National Park Warden, Holland Village Hall, 8.00
23 Cons Room Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms
24 Bishopsnympton Gardening Club Spring Show, Parish Hall, 7.30
25 Disco, S Molton Assembly Rooms, 8.00
Start of School Term
28 Town Council meeting, Town Hall, 7.00
29 Christian Aid Fashion Show, Church Hall, Duke Street, S Molton, 7.30
W I Group Meeting, Bishopsnympton Church Hall, 7.30
30 Church Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms

MAY

1 Archdeacon's visitation, Holland, 7.30
Broken Ringers Ball, Filleigh Parish Hall, 9.00 (in aid of Church repairs)
3 Dulverton Fair, Pannier Market, S Molton
Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
4 May Day Sports, Football Ground, S Molton
Chapleyard Revel/Open Air Rhythm, Georgenympton Village Hall
6 Volunteer Bureau A C A B, Assembly Rooms
7 County council Elections
Georgenympton W I Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms A C A B, Queen Hall, S Molton, 7.30
7-9 Bishopsnympton Players' Concert
8 Open Dance, S Molton Pen Chittlehampton Town Band Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
9 Sale of Bed-head clothes, Church Hall (in aid of Cancer Research Campaign)
Lions Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms
Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
10 Georgenympton Ball, Coffee Morning, Assembly Rooms
S Molton Group Y F C's Show & Cattle Sale
Concert, Chulmleigh School, 7.30
15 Lions Charter Night, Queens Suite, Assembly Rooms & Queen Hotel, S Molton
16 S Molton Infant School PTA Spring Fair
Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
17 Filleigh v Bishopsnympton (Whitbread Village Cricket Champ.), Deer Park, 2.30
British Fishing Contest begins
19 S Molton Group YFCs Sheep Sale, Cattle Market
21-23 Devon County Show, Exeter
22 Rotaract Charter/Presidents Night, 8.00, Queens Suite, Assembly Rooms & Queen Hotel
23 Christian Aid Concert, S Molton Ch, 7.30
Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
24 Spring Holiday, Bishopsnympton Fete, 2.30
26 Town Council meeting, Town Hall, 7.00
29 Liscarot trip leaves S Molton, 8.00
Disco, Assembly Rooms, 8.00
29-31 Barnstaple Fair Festival
30 Christian Aid Concert, S Molton Ch, 8.00
S Molton YFCs Rally, Cattle Mkt & Queen
Bishopsnympton Revel starts
31 Songs of Praise, Bishopsnympton Church
Devon and Somerset Pony Club Show

MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT DOESN'T CLASH WITH ANOTHER BY

PLANNING AHEAD

JUNE
4 Concert, Blackmore Methodist Chapel
6 Blackmore Gate Horse Show/Gymkhana
13 Jazz Night, Goose and Gander Hotel
20 Filleigh Gymkhana/Showjumping Dog Show
24 Chulmleigh School Fete
26-27 Old Time Music Hall, Assembly Rooms
27 Queenstone Gymkhana/Showjumping Dog Show
Great Fete Control Park, 2.30

JULY
5 S Molton School Fete
10 S S Arts Jubilee Concert with Yeldall Brendin, S Molton Parish Church
11-18 Horticultural Week
17-20 Pioneer Festival, S Molton Church
18 West Anstey Gymkhana
22 End of School Term
25 Georgenympton Pioneer Show
26 CAME Fete, Dinsberton Village, E Anstey Romo Ash Revel starts
27 Holiday Playschemes starts (S Molton)

AUGUST
1 Bishopsnympton Pioneer Show
3 S Molton S F C Summer Show
6-7 S Molton Hunt & Allot Soc Show
8 East Anstey Pioneer Show
15 Chittlehampton Garden Show and Disco
Filleigh Fete & Garden Show, Castle Hill
16 Festival of Transport (Round Table)
19-22 Olde English Fayre, S Molton
28 Dulverton Feat (S Molton) Pony Club Cross Country/Showjumping/Dressage
North Forse Farm, Chittlehampton
29 Great Ash Gymkhana & Children s Sports

SEPTEMBER
1 School Term starts
10 Barnstaple Fair
26 S Molton Carnival

OCTOBER
22 Devon and Somerset Staghounds Hunt Ball
24 W F U Dinner and Dance

NEWS COLUMN

VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES

To ensure that the correct contacts at the Information Centre are known in the villages around South Molton a number of village representatives have recently been appointed. At present the following villages are covered by the scheme: [illegible] and WEST ANSTEY.

Representatives in each of these villages will be making themselves known to people in their communities.

If any other village would like to join the scheme please contact David Tanner at 1 East St South Molton (2119).

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

SPONSORSHIP

Thanks are due to B S (South Molton) for sponsoring this issue and to an individual subscriber who wishes to remain anonymous. The December 1981 issue and those from March 1982 onwards are available for sponsorship. Details from David Tanner (contact as above)

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Is YOUR village organising an event that should be advertised in this Diary?

Send telephone or bring along the details to the Library at 1 East Street, South Molton, telephone South Molton 2120.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

We have been asked to draw attention to the following

S Molton R I Centre at Church Hall, Duke on 2nd Wednesday each month at 7.15 p.m. everyone welcome

Story House day centre for the retarded are disabled 125 East Street, South Molton. Lunchbox Club every Friday, Tel [illegible]

THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN SPONSORED BY

SOUTH MOLTON

Building Supplies (South Molton) Ltd. B S Services B S Hardware

Building & Plumbers Merchants, The Yard, North Street
Electrical & Plumbing, Kingdom House, North Street
Retail Hardware Store, 74 South Street

Tel S M 3206 Mr P Harwood Est 51
Tel S M 3206 Mr J Saunders Est 42
Tel S M 3896 Mr G H Kingdom Est 11

Appendix 8—Final Survey: Questionnaire (Individuals)

Please tick the appropriate boxes, or write in the answers requested. If you answered "20 Questions" - the leaflet with yellow question marks on the cover, circulated in June 1980 - please put a tick in this box - ☐

1. On what subjects have you needed help, information or advice in the past year?	2. To which organisations or people did you turn for such help?

3. Had you heard of the Information Centre before reading this questionnaire? Yes ☐ No ☐

- if "Yes", how did you hear of it? (Please tick the box(es).)

Friend ☐ Relative ☐ Other person ☐ Village representative ☐ Poster or leaflet ☐
Radio ☐ Library ☐ Newspaper ☐ Sign in window above Library ☐ Sign in Square ☐
"News from the South Molton Information Centre" ☐ "20 Questions" ☐ Mobile Library ☐
Other source (please specify) _____

4. Has the existence of the Information Centre (including C.A.B., Volunteer Bureau, Small Firms Service, Tourist Information), made it any easier for you to get the help you required?
Yes ☐ No ☐

- if "Yes", in what way? _____
- if "No", why not? _____

5. What other services do you think are needed in South Molton which could be added to those already at the Information Centre?

e.g. specialised legal advice ☐ financial advice ☐ other (please specify) _____
consumer advice ☐ housing advice ☐ _____

Questions 6 - 20 are the same as those asked in the first questionnaire, "20 Questions" - this is necessary because things have changed since June 1980 when that was circulated. So please answer these questions whether or not you answered them the first time round.

6. How often do you use South Molton Library? Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never ☐
7. Do you use any other library in the area? Yes ☐ No ☐ If "Yes", which one? _____
8. How often do you use the Mobile Library Service based at South Molton?
Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never ☐
9. Do you use another mobile service? Yes ☐ No ☐ If "Yes", which one? _____
10. Do you have access to a telephone? Yes ☐ No ☐
- if "Yes", is it - a) own 'phone? b) neighbour's 'phone? c) public callbox/payphone?
11. Do you listen to Morning Sou'West (B.B.C. radio)? Yes ☐ No ☐
12. Do you have a television? Yes ☐ No ☐
13. Do you normally do your weekly shopping in South Molton? Yes ☐ No ☐
- if "No", which town do you visit? _____
14. Do you drive or have someone to drive you _____ ☐ ☐
- if "No", how far are you from the nearest 'bus stop served by a weekly, or more frequent, service to South Molton? _____
15. Which local newspapers and magazines do you read (including parish newsletters and magazines?) _____

16. How long have you lived in the South Molton area? _____

- if you are not a "native" of the area, where did you live before moving to this area?

_____

17. How far do you live from the centre of South Molton? _____

18. Which of the following age groups are you in? (Please tick the appropriate box.)

Male	0-16	☐	17-39	☐	40-64	☐	65+ ☐
Female	0-16	☐	17-39	☐	40-59	☐	60+ ☐

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS ... the following two questions may be left unanswered but if you do choose to answer them, this will be most helpful to us. Please note that ALL RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

---

19. What is your occupation? _____

20. What is your name and address? _____

_____

Please put a tick here if you would like to talk to the Project Officer about any item. ☐

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS - PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO YOU OR DROP IT IN AT THE LIBRARY, 1 EAST STREET, SOUTH MOLTON - BY OCTOBER 16TH AT THE LATEST, PLEASE.

David G. Vanner,
Project Officer.

September 1981

WHY THIS SURVEY IS BEING CONDUCTED

The Information Project has now been running for about eighteen months. The two year experimental period comes to an end in February 1982, and so the time has come to find out just what people think of the services offered. The results of this assessment will help to determine how (or even if) the Information Centre should continue.

If you completed our earlier questionnaire (entitled "20 Questions" and circulated in June 1980), it is just as important for you to fill in this second one as for those who did not. This will enable useful comparisons to be made.

As before, the answers to this questionnaire will remain absolutely CONFIDENTIAL and, unless you decide to put your name on it, completely ANONYMOUS.

Thank you for your co-operation.

David G. Vanner,
Project Officer.

SOUTH MOLTON LIBRARY
COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT

ANOTHER 20 QUESTIONS TO HELP US TO HELP YOU

1 East Street, South Molton,
Telephone South Molton 2178.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix 9 — Final Survey: Questionnaire (Organisations)

INTRODUCTION: This questionnaire is part of a survey being conducted to assess the value of the Information Centre to people in South Molton and district. A different questionnaire entitled "Another 20 Questions" is being circulated to the public at large, to obtain individual views. This one is being sent to a wide variety of organisations in the area to obtain their corporate views and, in particular, to see how (or if) the Information Project has made impact on their activities. The questions should not take more than a few minutes to answer. If there are any points which require further explanation, the Project Officer, David Vanner, will be pleased to attend a meeting to discuss them.

NOTE: Questions 2 and 3 will probably require a show of hands at a meeting or, if members are reluctant to disclose publicly that they have needed advice this could be done by secret ballot.

1. How many members have you ? Total..... Active.....

2. Approximately what proportion of your active members have heard of the Information Centre, or know of the presence of its constituent agencies (Citizens Advice Bureau/Volunteer Bureau/Small Firms Service/Tourist Information)? .....

3. Approximately what proportion have visited/telephoned the Centre for information/advice or help? .....

4. Has your organisation contributed in any way to the work of the Centre or that of any of its constituents? Yes ☐ No ☐

   - if yes, please specify how .....
   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

5. Has your organisation benefitted in any way, either directly or indirectly? Yes ☐ No ☐

   - if yes, please specify how .....
   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

events diary kept at the Library counter, or in the diary printed in 'News from the South Molton Information Centre"? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Does your organisation feel that the newsheet/diary is a good idea and worth continuing? Yes ☐ No ☐

- if yes, would you be interested in using the front cover news space to inform the public about your organisation's activities? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. How would your organisation like to see the Information Centre funded in future?

(a) Central Government
(b) Local Government
(c) Voluntary sources
(d) A combination of these
(e) No preference
(f) Other (please specify) .....

.....

Note: for the first two experimental years the British Library and Devon Library Services have jointly covered the costs.

9. How would your organisation like to see the Information Centre managed in future?

(a) Library management
(b) Small independent group
(c) Widely representative group
(d) No preference
(e) Other (please specify) .....

.....

Note: currently there is a Project Steering Committee with county representatives, and a Local Liaison Group consisting of representatives of agencies using the Centre and other local bodies with a direct interest in the Centre - e.g. the Town Council.

10. Have you any other comments on the Community Information Project, the Centre itself, or any of its constituents?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please return the completed form to:-

David Venner,
Information Centre,
1 East Street,
SOUTH MOLTON

Tel. South Molton 2378

Appendix 10—Final Survey: Results

Analysis of questionnaires from respondents to both surveys.

Fifty-two people answered both questionnaires, but, of these, only 37 pairs of replies could be matched up, the others having chosen not to identify themselves on one or both questionnaires. For these 37, the following characteristics apply:

15 were male, 22 female
28 were of retirement age or over, 4 were aged 40–59/64 and 3 were aged 17–39
26 lived more than ½ mile from the centre of South Molton

Length of residence:
9 had lived in the area for between 0 and 5 years
5 from 6–10 years
8 from 11–25 years
4 for more than 25 years but not native to area
9 were native
(2 did not answer)

Occupation:
21 retired
8 housewives
2 farmers
2 professionals
2 part-time or unemployed
1 manual worker
1 did not answer

Overall, it will be seen that there is a considerable bias towards the older age group — far more than the proportion in the community as a whole, and quite a bit greater than in the first survey above. Perhaps older, retired people have more time to fill in questionnaires!

Of these 37 who answered both questionnaires, 18 respondents to the first survey referred to information or advice needed in the previous 12 months, and 14 to the source of help. Eleven referred to a need in the second survey and all of these gave the source of help. Of these 11, nine were helped by one of the Information Centre agencies (four by the CAB,

two by the Volunteer Bureau, two by the library and one by the tourist information service). The other two took their queries to other agencies in the town, viz, the Health Centre and the Lions Club.

The difference made by the Information Centre can most meaningfully be assessed in relation to the nine who had been helped by one of the agencies, although some of the remainder contributed comments, possibly based on the experience of friends or acquaintances. The comments of eight of the nine were as follows (the ninth did not comment on this point):

"Advice given on procedure"	— CAB clients
"Help at hand when needed"	
"Help available"	
"Remains to be seen" (query had not been fully answered — awaiting further information)	
"Volunteer provided"	— Volunteer Bureau
"Transport provided"	
"Books made available"	— Library
"Leaflets available"	— Tourist information service

The comments of those not recording an information need included the following:

"not needed so far but a good idea, with everything in one place"

and

"would have been useful when we first moved into the area".

Appendix 11—Those Attending South Molton Information Project Conference, October 1982

Constable Adams	Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, Chulmleigh
Sir I Amory Bt	Chairman, Community Council for Devon
Mr P Armson	Librarian in Charge, Plympton
Miss Z Baba	College of Librarianship, Wales (National Library Malaysia, Training Division)
Mr O Baker	Assistant County Librarian, Devon
Miss K Barlow	Senior Assistant, Buckinghamshire Libraries
Mr P Bottrill	Area Librarian, South Devon
Mr G Boulton	Librarian in Charge, Newton Abbot
Ms J Bowen	Public Libraries Management Research Unit, Polytechnic School of Librarianship, Leeds
Mr L Boyce	East Devon College of Further Education
Mr D Brownlow	Mobile librarian, South Molton
Miss S Buchanan	Community Council for Somerset
Mr J Buckhurst	Cornwall County Library
Mr A Bunch	Information Librarian, Cambridgeshire
Mr I Campbell	Derbyshire Rural Community Council
Mr A Candy	NACAB, Devon and Cornwall Area
Mr E Chapman	Chief Librarian, Doncaster
Councillor R Chapple	Chairman, Devon County Council Amenities and Countryside Committee
Mr F Clarke	Reference Librarian, Devon
Ms S Clarkson	Moorlands Fieldworker, Community Council of Staffordshire
Miss S Cotton	Librarian in Charge, South Molton
Ms T Cozens	Group Librarian, Derbyshire
Mrs E Crossley	NACAB Organiser, Horsham (Surrey and West Sussex Area)
Mrs H Curtis	South Molton Project Consultant
Dr D Davies	Dartington North Devon Trust
Mrs J Dunkley	NACAB, Devon and Cornwall Area
Mr R Edmonds	District Librarian, Nottinghamshire
Mr P Ellis	Area Librarian, Central Devon
Mr C Evans	Suffolk County Library
Mr D Evans	Assistant Librarian, Dyfed

Mr C Goddard	Senior Assistant Librarian, Exeter
Sergeant Goodman	Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, South Molton
Mrs M Greaves	First Assistant, Plymouth
Mr G Green	Librarian in Charge, Bideford
Miss D Hall	Senior Assistant Librarian, Barnstaple
Miss H Hanson	Devon Library Services
Mrs K Harding	Volunteer Bureau Organiser, Cornwall
Councillor W Harding	Chairman, Cornwall County Council Libraries Committee
Mrs S Harper	Rural Community Council of Hereford and Worcester
Mr R Hassell	Assistant County Librarian, East Sussex
Miss C Head	Devon Library Services
Miss J Healey	Lincolnshire Library Service
Mrs A Henderson	Librarian in Charge, Plymstock
Mr B Holgate	Support Services Librarian, Exmouth
Miss F Holt	Technical Services Librarian, Hampshire
Mr F Hooper	East Devon College of Further Education
Mrs M Huckle	Information Services Librarian, Hertfordshire
Mr G Hughes	Librarian in Charge, Tiverton
Mr J Hughes	Clwyd Library Service
Mr K Hunt	Area Librarian, North Devon
Miss C Hursey	Community Council for Cambridge
Mr R Hutton	Community Services Librarian, Devon
Mrs J Hyde	Librarian in Charge, Teignmouth
Mr C Joynson	Staffordshire Library Service
Ms E Kempson	Somerset County Council
Mrs S Kennedy	NACAB, Yorkshire/Humberside Area
Mr D Kennington	Director, Capital Planning Information, Leicestershire
Mrs S Kenyon	Librarian in Charge, Gillingham, Dorset
Mr G King	Central Services Librarian, Barnstaple
Miss E Kyle	Volunteer Bureau Development Officer, Hertfordshire
Mr P Lange	Assistant Area Librarian, North Devon
Mr G Langley	County Reference Librarian, Avon
Mr M Maguire	Area Librarian, East Devon
Mr D May	British Library Research and Development Department
Mr G Mort	Assistant County Librarian, Somerset
Miss E Nannestad	Lincolnshire Library Service
Miss J Nicholas	Senior Assistant Librarian, Torquay
Mr P Oldroyd	Divisional Librarian, Leicestershire

Miss J Osborne	London Borough of Sutton Arts and Libraries Service
Mr W Palmer	Community Information Bureau, Minehead, Somerset
Miss S Pargeter	Librarian in Charge, Kingsbridge
Mr B Perry	Director, British Library Research and Development Department
Mrs S Pindard	Senior Assistant Librarian, Lancashire
Mr S Pindard	St Helens Library, Merseyside
Ms J Platt	NACAB, Wessex Area
Mr M Pool	Senior Assistant Librarian, Torquay
Mr T Porter	Hereford and Worcester Libraries Department
Miss L Prince	Dartmoor National Park, Interpretation Officer
Miss J Richardson	Development Commission
Mr R Roberts	Librarian in Charge, Crediton
Miss A Rogers	Surrey Library Service
Ms B Rowan	Children's Librarian, Exmouth
Mrs C Sanderson	Librarian in Charge, Shaftesbury, Dorset
Miss B Santer	Central Services Librarian, Torquay
Miss J Sharman	Reference Librarian, Plymouth
Miss A Shute	County Librarian, Devon
Mr G Smith	County Librarian, Leicestershire
Mrs J Smith	Librarian in Charge, Dawlish
Inspector M Smith	Northumbria Police force
Mr P Stoyle	Divisional Reference Librarian, Somerset
Mr T Tebo	Community Information Bureau, Minehead, Somerset
Mr P Tobin	Branch Superintendent, Mid-Glamorgan Library Service
Mr C Turner	Head of Department, Brighton Polytechnic Department of Librarianship
Mr J Usmar	Director, Community Council for Devon
Mr D Venner	Project Officer
Mr R Vinnicombe	District Librarian, Nottinghamshire
Mr M Wade	London Borough of Sutton Arts and Libraries Service
Mr J Wallen	Assistant Area Librarian, West Devon
Mrs M Walling	NACAB Organiser, Hereford (West Midlands Area)
Miss C Weeks	Librarian in Charge, Paignton
Mr C Wildridge	Bibliographical and Information Services Librarian, Wiltshire
Mr S Woollett	Rural Officer, NCVO

Mr J Worley	Senior Assistant Librarian, Northamptonshire Library Service
Miss P Wyatt	Librarian in Charge, Ivybridge

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Appendix 12—Programme for South Molton Information Project Conference, October 1982

PROGRAMME

Friday 8 October 1982

From 4.30 p.m. 1 East Street	Registration and visits to the Community Information Centre. (The Centre will also be open to delegates on Saturday morning between 8.45 and 9.30 a.m.)
6.00 p.m. The Mayor's Parlour, Assembly Rooms	Sherry reception — Councillor Roy Chapple, Chairman, Devon County Council's Amenities and Countryside Committee
6.45 p.m. New Assembly Rooms	DINNER
8.00 p.m.	Speakers — (i) Brian Perry, Director, British Library Research and Development Department "The South Molton project in the context of British Library research" (ii) Geoffrey Smith, OBE, County Librarian, Leicestershire, and member of the British Library's Advisory Committee for Community Information Research "Information needs in rural areas: a national problem"

Saturday 9 October 1982

From 8.45 a.m. 1 East Street	The Community Information Centre is open to visitors.

9.30 a.m. New Assembly Rooms	Origins of the South Molton project — Owen Baker
9.50 a.m.	Links with agencies other than the library — Jean Dunkley and John Usmar
10.20 a.m.	COFFEE (New Assembly Rooms)
10.50 a.m.	The researcher — David Venner
11.05 a.m.	The local librarian — Sally Cotton
11.15 a.m.	The outsider's view — Helene Curtis
11.35 a.m.	The extension phase — Roy Hutton
11.45 a.m.	"Question time"— Chairman: Geoffrey Smith
12.30 p.m. Old Assembly Rooms	BUFFET LUNCH
2.15 p.m.	Discussion groups
3.30 p.m.	Plenary session and closing remarks (New Assembly Rooms)
4.15 p.m.	TEA (New Assembly Rooms)
	Transport leaves for Taunton station at 4.45 p.m.

Appendix 13—South Molton Community Information Centre: Terms of Reference

1. The role of Devon Library Services

Responsibility for:

the overall management for the use of the Centre — with due regard for County Council policy and in consideration of the views of the Centre Committee;

(b) the establishment of a Centre Committee;

(c) the funding of the Centre as a whole and for applying for grant aid to county, district and parish councils and other bodies as appropriate;

(d) the salary and accountability of the Centre Coordinator;

(e) maintenance of the Centre, including:

rent	cleaning
rates	Centre postage (i.e. not agencies')
electricity	Centre telephone calls (i.e. not agencies')
gas	telephone rental
water	maintenance

2. The composition and role of the Centre Committee

The Centre Committee will be an expansion of the local liaison group and will meet quarterly.

(a) Officers:
Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Coordinator

(b) Committee membership:
4 representatives from user organisations
1 representative from each of the following:
Devon County Council
North Devon District Council
South Molton Town Council
Association of Parish Councils, North Devon Area
County Librarian
Village representatives

Up to 3 specialist advisers (as required)
3 co-opted members from statutory organisations
3 co-opted members from voluntary organisations

(c) Functions:

(i) promote the use and development of the Centre;

(ii) be aware of the information and advice needs of the area;

(iii) foster and maintain links with other advice and information services;

(iv) develop and service the needs of village representatives;

(v) publish an Annual Report and Accounts in June and present them at an Annual General Meeting in that month, to which all Officers, Committee Members and members of the public in the area served by the Centre are entitled to attend;

(vi) be responsible for the publicity of the Centre as a whole.

(d) Finance:

funding for local projects (e.g. accommodation guide, newsletter, etc.)

3. The composition and role of the Centre sub-committee

To meet monthly and to report to the Centre Committee.

(a) Sub-committee membership:
Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Coordinator
2 representatives from the user agencies
1 representative of the County Librarian

(b) Function:
management of the day-to-day running of the Centre

4. User organisations — responsibility within the Centre

(a) to be mutually supportive towards other agencies;

(b) to attend occasional in-house liaison meetings;

(c) to report annually to the Centre Committee on 31 March;

(d) to ensure the security of the building;

(e) to adhere to published hours of opening and to amend these only after consultation with the Centre Sub-committee or Committee;

(f) to be responsible for the payment of telephone calls as follows:

CAB	(South Molton 2342)	— calls only
Volunteer Bureau	(South Molton 3167)	— rental and calls
Other organisations	(South Molton 2378)	— monitor calls and report to sub-committee
Library	(South Molton 2128)	— rental and calls

Appendix 14—Local Liaison Group: Membership, March 1983

Officers: Chairman: Mr D Verney, JP
Secretary: Mrs M Walker
Coordinator: Miss S Cotton, South Molton Librarian

Mr R Hutton	Project Head, representing Project Committee
Mr K Hunt	Area Librarian, representing County Librarian
Cllr J Isaac	Devon County Council
Cllr S Kingdon	North Devon District Council
Cllr J Fullbrook	North Devon District Council
Cllr Dr R Norris	South Molton Town Council
Cllr H Geen	South Molton Area, Association of Parish Councils
Mrs L Spiceley	Organiser, Barnstaple and South Molton CAB
Mrs H Falkner	Deputy-in-charge, South Molton CAB
Lady A Stevens	Acting Chairman, South Molton and District Volunteer Bureau
Mr W Pearce	Chairman, South Molton Archive
Mrs D Smith	representing Mole Valley Group of Women's Institutes
Mrs W Elson	Secretary, Bray Valley Group of Women's Institutes

Specialist advisers: Accountant
Bank manager
Solicitor

Appendix 15—News from the South Molton Information Centre, December 1982

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH MOLTON INFORMATION CENTRE

NUMBER TWENTY-THREE DECEMBER 1982

THE MOBILE LIBRARY

The Exmoor Mobile Library, based at South Molton, is one of sixteen mobile libraries in Devon that take the library service to people who would otherwise have difficulty in getting to a library. We have nine routes, covering over 150 different stops, in an area around South Molton that extends from Twitchen, on the foothills of Exmoor, to Lapford and the Taw Valley to the south, and from Swimbridge to Oldways End on the Somerset border.

On the van, we try to stock something for everyone. Westerns, Crime, Romance, Science Fiction, all sorts of novels, a full range of Non-Fiction and a good stock of Large Print and Children's Books.

But, try as we may, there is only room for about 2,000 books. So, if you cannot find what you want - please ask and we will do our best to help. Like any library, we have the back-up of the County, the Region and, ultimately, of the British Library, which covers the whole country. Did you know, for example, that we can get music scores for you, or play-sets for your drama group, or language courses on cassette?

The mobile library is not just books. If you want information on anything that concerns YOU - ask us. As well as having the resources of the Reference Library service behind us, we are also part of the South Molton Information Centre, with organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Volunteer Bureau. Any enquiry will be treated in the strictest confidence and even if we cannot help, we can put you in touch with the people who can.

If you want to find out more about the mobile library - ask the staff at South Molton Library (South Molton 2128 or 2378), or ask on the blue van.

Don Brownlow - Mobile Librarian

SOUTH MOLTON'S George Hotel

Free House Telephone South Molton 2514

We invite bookings for our Traditional Christmas Luncheons for parties and for shoppers, served from 10th December up to and including Christmas Eve Luncheon. Roast Turkey, Pheasant, etc., etc., - or why not book a party of 8-10 and have a Whole Roast Goose to carve yourself at your table?

Resident Managing Director - Mrs. Jackie Kingdon

[Accolade 1982 Country Gentleman's Association "Best of British Pubs" Guide]

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTH MOLTON COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT

LOCAL EVENTS DIARY

DECEMBER

All month: Joy Penland, paintings, S. Molton Museum.
1 Peter Redgrove, poetry reading, North Devon College, 8.00 p.m.
Concert, Barnstaple Royal British Legion, Town Band and Musical Comedy Society, Queen's Hall.
2 County Councillor J. Yeoe, County Councillor's Surgery, Information Centre, S. Molton, 11.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.
Rodney Parsons' coffee morning, S. Molton Assembly Rooms.
S. Molton Guides Association Christmas meeting, Christopher Moore, 8.00 p.m.
S. Molton School, certificate evening.
Exeter Peace Choir, Queen's Hall, 8.00 p.m.
3 Country and Western Dance, Georgeynympton Village Hall.
Concert, 'Unobserved', North Devon College, 8.00 p.m.
Ansley YFC Disco, Yeo Mill Village Hall.
Barnstaple Eggardon Hunt Ball, 8.00 p.m. (Ashcroggney 271, Lapford 216).
S. Molton Playgroup Bingo, Assembly Rooms, 7.30
S. Molton School Toy Fair.
3 - 4 'Godspell', West Buckland School, 7.30 p.m. (Fitleigh 2811).
4 Christmas flower decorations day course, S. Molton Community College, 10.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.
Sat S. Molton Cottage Hospital, League of Friends Christmas Fair, Community College.
Concert in aid of Cottage Hospital, S. Molton Community College, 7.30 p.m.
Rose Ash Christmas Poultry Whist Drive, Village Hall.
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Queen's Hall, Barnstaple, 7.30 p.m.
Rock Collaret, Plough, Torrington, 8.15 p.m.
Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
5 S. Molton Parish Church, confirmation service, 10.00 a.m.
5 - 11 Chumleigh School play, 'Saints', 7.30 p.m. (Chumleigh 80215).
5 Bishopsnympton, Church Christmas Whist Drive, Village Hall.
7 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
Chittlehampton Playgroup Christmas Whist Drive, Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
Meshaw YFC Whist Drive, Bishopsnympton Village Hall.
11 'Night of the Iguana', North Devon College, 7.30.
Sat Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller Jazz, Queen's Hall, Barnstaple, 8.00 p.m.
11 S. Molton School 'Dracula Spectacular'.
Sun Inner Wheel coffee morning, S. Molton Assembly Rooms.
Christmas poultry whist drive, Mariansleigh Village Hall (Oshore).
10 - 16 January 1982, 'In the footsteps of R.L. Stevenson' exhibition, Bexford Centre.
10 'The Cottage' art lecture, Bexford Village Hall (Bexford 281).
Group for the bereaved, S. Molton Information Centre, 7.30 p.m. (see News Column).
Chittlehampton Village Hall Dance, 9.00 p.m.
11 Dulverton Community Market, Dulverton Town Hall, Sat 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Lapford Club Christmas Bazaar, S. Molton Assembly Rooms, and coffee morning.
Georgeynympton Church Christmas Whist Drive, S. Molton Assembly Rooms, 7.30 p.m.
Burrington Advent Fair.
Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
Fitleigh School Barn Dance, West Buckland Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
Pony Club Christmas Social, Georgeynympton Village Hall (Bishopsnympton 486, 253).
12 S. Molton Choral and Operatic Society Carol Concert, Methodist Church, 6.30 p.m.
Crafts at Christmas exhibition and sale, Plough, Torrington, 1.00 - 5.00 p.m.
'The Last Tycoon' film, White Hart, Bratton Fleming, 7.30 p.m.
13 Chittlehampton Village Hall Christmas Bingo, 7.30.
Alan Bramwyche, poetry reading, North Devon College, 8.00 p.m.
S. Molton Twirming Association Social, Bell Inn, Bull Mill.
14 Chittlehampton Christmas Whist Drive, Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
15 North Devon College Carol Concert, 7.30 p.m.
Hawkridge Christmas Whist Drive.
Eggardon Hunt Chairs and Wine Party.
16 - 17 Fitleigh School 'Dick Whittington', 7.00 p.m.
18 S. Molton Town Band, coffee morning, Assembly Rooms.
The Yetties, Queen's Hall, Barnstaple, 8.00 p.m.
17 Ansley House Lunch Club Christmas Lunch, S. Molton
Meshaw YFC Christmas party and Group Mini Pantomime Contest, Witheridge.
North Molton Parish Hall Poultry Whist Drive, 8.00
'The Wanderlust' play, Plough, Torrington, 8.00 p.m.
19 S. Molton Town Band Christmas Compliment Concert,
Sat George Hotel, 8.00 p.m.
Member of Parliament, Mr. T. Speller, 'Surgery', S. Molton Information Centre, 8.00 p.m.
Christmas sale of arts and crafts, Witheridge Parish Hall Rm.
North Devon Choral Society Carol Concert, Queen's Hall, Barnstaple.
Bingo, Amory House, South Molton, 7.30 p.m.
Disco 2000, S. Molton Assembly Rooms.
20 Baptist Church Carol Service, S. Molton, 3.00 p.m.
Carol Service, Pannier Market, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
20 - 22 Carol Mania, S. Molton Rotary Club (in aid of Guide Hut fund).
20 S. Molton Choral and Operatic Society Carol Concert, St Molton Church, 7.30 p.m.
S. Molton School Carol Concert (afternoon)
21 End of Term.
Chittlehampton Brownies Christmas Whist Drive, Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
S. Molton Town Council meeting, Town Hall, 7.00 p.m.
St Molton Church Poultry Whist Drive, Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
Christmas Whist Drive, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30
21 - 22 Carol Singing, Mariansleigh.
23 West Buckland Church Whist Drive, 7.45 p.m.
Community Market Disco, Dulverton.
Christmas Mark Disco, Plough, Torrington, 9.00 p.m.
Disco 2000, S. Molton Assembly Rooms.
24 Chittlehampton Conservation Poultry Whist Drive, Village Hall, 8.00 p.m.
25 Christmas Day.
Mass at the George, S. Molton.
26 Bank Holiday.
27 Bank Holiday.
31 New Year's Eve dance, Georgeynympton Village Hall.

MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT DOESN'T CLASH WITH ANOTHER BY

PLANNING AHEAD

JANUARY 1982

1 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
Boot Holiday
3 'Tom Thumb', Queen's Hall, Barnstaple
4 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
7 Beginning of Term.
Council for Christian Care, S. Molton Information Centre, 10.30 - 11.30 a.m.
8 County Councillor J. Yeoe, S. Molton Information Centre, 11.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.
9 Great Haven's Magic Show, Plough, Torrington, Sat 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.
Dulverton Community Market
Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
9 'Anne Hall, Woody Allen film, White Hart, Bratton Fleming, 7.30 p.m.
11 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
12 Patricia Beer, poetry reading, N. Devon College, 8.00
13 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
15 S. Molton OAP Association Dinner Dance, Assembly Rooms.
20 'Off the cuff', Kenneth Lawrbend music talk, Plough, Torrington, 8.00 p.m.
22 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
Sun Cyrano de Bergerac, Orchard Theatre, Plough, Torrington, 7.30 p.m.
25 Town Council meeting, S. Molton Town Hall, 7.00
Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
25 Jan. - 12 Feb. 'The Village Green', exhibition, Plough, Torrington.
29 Bingo, Amory House, S. Molton, 7.30 p.m.
30 Jazz at the George, S. Molton.

NEWS COLUMN

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Tony Speller, M.P. for North Devon, will be holding a 'surgery' at the Information Centre on 18th December at 6.00 p.m. He will be at your service to discuss any matters you may wish to raise with him. An appointment is not essential but it is advisable - please 'phone Barnstaple 5611 for further information.

CHRISTMAS FOR CHRISTIAN CARE

Mrs Cattermole, the Council for Christian Care's Social Worker, will not be able to come to the Information Centre on 1st December but will be available on 5th January 1982 between 10.30 and 11.30 a.m. to assist.

The Council for Christian Care was established in 1976 as a n ecumenical council for social responsibility in Devon. It is actively involved in adoption, deaf welfare and family support. Call in and see Mrs. Cattermole on the first Wednesday of every month at the Information Centre if you would like to discuss anything with her, or telephone Braunton 812242 any day between 9.10.00 a.m. and 6.7.00 p.m.

A CRISP FOR THE BEREAVED

A social group for the bereaved meets at the Information Centre on alternate Friday evenings at 7.30 p.m. This self-help group is here to help people facing bereavement, so if you would like to join in, do come along. Telephone S. Molton 2378 or 2362 for further information.

OLDER CHAIRS SPINDLES OR WINDOW LOCKS Please Note

The pupils of South Molton Secondary School are raising funds to enable any pensioner living in South Molton District who would like either a chair lock, or a spindle, or one window lock, brought and fitted free of charge (wooden windows only). Please note, if you live in warden care accommodation, you cannot have a chair lock. If you are interested please write or ring South Molton School and Community College. Telephone 2129. Fitting will be done in the New Year, by trained pupils of the upper school, under the guidance of the woodwork teacher and the Police/Crime Prevention Officer.

SPONSORS! SPONSORS! SPONSORS!

Our thanks to this month's sponsors of the Newsletter, the George Hotel and M.K. South Molton, and to those who have helped us in the past and offered to help us in the future.

DEADLINE ..... DEADLINE ..... DEADLINE

The deadline for items for the January issue of the News letter is 15th December. Please telephone South Molton 2378 or enter your events in the diary in South Molton Library by then if you would like them included. Thank you.

ASK AT M.K. HARDWARE
FOR OUR
"GIFTS WORTH GIVING"
CHRISTMAS LIST

FROM ALL AT
M.K. SOUTH MOLTON

19 PHONE 3304
SOUTH MOLTON
PHONE 3304

YOUR CONTACT IS PETER WORNALD AT BUILDING SUPPLIES
JOHN SAUNDERS AT M.K. SERVICES DAVID MOORE AT M.K. HARDWARE

FOR DETAILS OF
WHO WE ARE AND
WHAT WE CAN OFFER
WE HAVE A NEW PUBLICATION
"INTRODUCING M.K. SOUTH MOLTON"

Appendix 16—Informal Questionnaire of Village Representatives: Guidelines, April 1983

South Molton Information Centre has been operating for 2½ years: the following agencies are currently open there: Citizens' Advice Bureau, Volunteer Bureau, Small Firms Service, Council for Christian Care, County Councillor, Tourist Information, Library and Member of Parliament.

1. Please indicate how useful you and your parish have found the Centre and its agencies in:

providing information e.g. news, events, changes in law, benefits, etc.	very useful/fairly useful/some use/ not very useful/no use
providing an advice service e.g. on business, family or consumer matters, etc.	very useful/fairly useful/some use/ not very useful/no use

NB Different queries may have resulted in different perceptions of usefulness.

Has the Centre helped in other ways?

Any comments?

What else might it do?

2. Has your parish as a whole helped the Centre?

by providing information e.g. events, news, lists of parish organisations, etc.	yes, a lot/yes, a bit/no
with advice and ideas	yes, a lot/yes, a bit/no
in other ways	yes, a lot/yes, a bit/no

Can you suggest any ways that your parish could improve its links with the Centre?

During the last year you have received "News from South Molton Information Centre", minutes of the Centre's local liaison group,

literature from the various agencies, have been visited by the Centre's coordinator and have been invited to various meetings at the Centre.

3. Please indicate how well informed you are about the Centre and its agencies:

the Centre as a whole	very well/well/fairly well/ not very well/badly
its individual agencies	very well/well/fairly well/ not very well/badly

How could the Centre improve its links with your parish and its inhabitants?

Which of these approaches listed above have you found most useful?

Would more formal meetings and/or training sessions help?

4. Please outline how you have represented the Centre in your parish:

Have you, for instance: put up posters
distributed the newsletter
passed on leaflets
distributed local organisation lists
given formal talks to local organisations
mentioned the Centre in day-to-day conversation
put items in, for example, Parish Magazine
any others, please specify

5. Approximately how many times have *you* visited or contacted the Centre in the last six months? (Please exclude the Library from your answers here)

for formal meetings e.g. village representative meetings, Community Lunches, agency's meetings	none/1–3/4–6/more than 6
to consult one of the agencies or coordinator	none/1–3/4–6/more than 6
to man one of the agencies	none/1–3/4–6/more than 6
for any other reason (please specify)	

6. Do *you* use South Molton library regularly (i.e. at least once a month)?

For what purpose?

7. Do *you* use South Molton Mobile library regularly (i.e. at least once a month)?

8. Please estimate the number of people *you* have referred to the Centre or its agencies in the last six months.

9. "News from South Molton Information Centre" has been published monthly for 2 years: Is its content and layout satisfactory?
   How could it be improved?

10. Does the timing of its publication (i.e. the beginning of the month) pose any problems for you in distributing it in your parish? If so what time would suit you and your parish best?

11. How do *you* normally distribute and display it

    in bulk to local shops/post offices/garages
    public houses
    churches/chapels
    village halls
    schools
    others (please specify)

    door to door in all or part of the parish

    at meetings of local organisations

    put copies up on noticeboards

    any other ways (please specify)

12. Does your parish contribute to the newsletter:
    by providing information for the local events diary?
    by providing news items or articles?
    by encouraging local firms to sponsor it?
    in any other way? please specify

13. What do you yourself feel is the most useful way that a village representative can provide an effective link between the Information Centre (and its agencies) and his/her local community?

    If you feel a village representative cannot provide such a link, could you explain why?

    Do you wish to continue as the Centre's representative in your community over the next year?

Appendix 17—Tourist Attractions Leaflet, 1983

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SOUTH MOLTON AREA

For Further Information Please Contact:-

INFORMATION CENTRE
1 EAST STREET
SOUTH MOLTON
NORTH DEVON
Tel South Molton 2378 or 2128

Welcome to the South Molton Area 1983

1 Ashley Countryside Collection
2 Chapel Craft
3 Cobbaton Combat Vehicles Museum
4 Head Mill Trout Farm
5 Mole House Pottery
6 North Hayne Riding Centre
7 Pets
8 Quince Honey Farm
9 South Molton Museum
10 Stuart Bass Pottery and Country Crafts
11 Thorne House Crafts

THE ASHLEY COUNTRYSIDE COLLECTION
WINKLEIGH Devon

To Ashleigh's 23B, RAC approached on A377 at Eggesford Station and on the B3220 near Winkleigh, is a lovely rural setting with among a million collection of 48 breeds of British sheep, including all rare breeds. Possess exhibitions. Over 1,000 items of life in, farms and open fireplaces are Wheelwrights, coopering, smiths, cobbling, dairying, spinning, weaving, thatching, Victorian dress. Suitable for all ages. Picnic area for use of all visitors. Disabled people welcome. Craft shop and cafe on site.

Easter-October: Bank Holidays, Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays 10.00-18.00, every day in August except Thursdays. Free parking. Schools and pre-booked parties welcome. Adults 50p, primary school children 30p.

Chapel Craft

"An old Chapel which has been converted into a Craft Shop, offering a range of good quality locally made crafts.

Signposted on the A377 at the Chulmleigh/Eggesford junction (Leigh Cross), just over half a mile off the main road, we specialise in engraved glass and enamel decoration items, in a peaceful setting by the river with ample parking, you will be made very welcome and find many things which are unobtainable elsewhere, with a good selection in the lower price range as well as luxury goods.

OPEN: Weekday Afternoons from Easter until Christmas and All Day Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

Chapel Craft, The Old Chapel, Bridge Reach, Chulmleigh, Devon. Telephone: Chulmleigh 63084."

MAKE TRACKS FOR

COBBATON COMBAT VEHICLES MUSEUM

LLUSBERLEIGH to BARNSTAPLE

- Over 30 World War II British and Canadian Tanks, Trucks and Armoured Cars.
- Weapons
- Rarities and other Military Equipment.
- Also Soldiers at War, The Home Front, with Wireless, Clothing and Decorations.
- Shop with Books, Pins, Tapes and Models.
- ALL UNDER COVER.
- Children's Assault Courses
- Picnic and Play Area

OPEN: 10.00 - 6.00 [illegible]

Head Mill Trout Farm

HEAD MILL TROUT FARM

Visitors are always welcome at Head Mill, situated in the picturesque Mole Valley and featured in the film, "Tarka the Otter". Stroll around the ponds while your trout are caught to order, or buy smoked trout and delicious smoked trout paté from the farm shop. In spite of their exclusive image, trout are surprisingly inexpensive and easy to cook and you will be offered useful cooking tips and a recipe leaflet with a number of exciting serving suggestions.

Head Mill is situated on the B3226 South Molton to Exeter road, one mile north of where it joins the Barnstaple to Exeter road at Kings Nympton Station.

HEADMILL TROUT FARM,
LIMBERLEIGH, NORTH DEVON EX37 9HA
Tel. Chulmleigh (0769) [illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Exmoor Pottery was established in North Molton village in 1963, with a workshop and showroom in an old barn behind the village hall, close to the square and church. Our studio now produces a variety of earthenware and stoneware pottery, together with individual ceramic models and figures. All the work is made by hand and embellished with attractive patterns, so as to maintain the traditional country pottery style of the South West, where clay discovered and therefore has been produced from local clay for more than two centuries.

OPEN May to end September 2 pm - 6 pm Monday to Friday or by appointment
Closed on Bank Holidays

MALT HOUSE POTTERY
FORE ST, NORTH MOLTON, NORTH DEVON
Telephone N Molton 0598 840 334

NORTH RATHE
RIDING & TRAINING CENTRE

North Rathe, Bishops Nympton, South Molton

RIDING OUT, RIDING TUITION BY EXPERIENCED STAFF WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO CHILDREN.

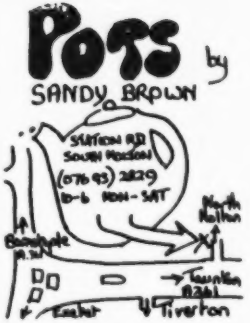
3 OR 5 DAY COURSES FOR CHILDREN
(Non Residential)

Includes: Riding Lessons, Pony Care, Grooming, Saddle Management, Care of Tack

Also Sunday & Saturday Full or Part Livery

ALL AT REASONABLE RATES

For further information please Telephone
Bishops Nympton 323 (Daytime)
South Molton 2593 (Evenings)



IT'S A HIVE OF ACTIVITY AT QUINCE HONEY FARM

- OPEN all day, EVERY day.
- See the living wonder of the wild Exmoor Honey Bees behind glass in their natural habitat.
- Shop for Honey & Beeswax products.
- Ample free parking. Coffe. Picnic Area.

ADMISSION 40p 16 Yrs. Accompanied children free.
South Molton. South Devon. Tel. South Molton (0769) 3401

SOUTH MOLTON MUSEUM

The Museum is situated in the Guildhall built in 1740-1743 and contains a unique collection of items of everyday use over the last three centuries. Its collection of pewter is reputed to be one of the finest in the West Country, and its fire engine (1736) one of the oldest. The massive visitor press on display is particularly worthy for its hand cut wooden screw. There are many other items including the shelves for South Molton dated 1980 and 1884. Mounts, exhibitions held.

OPEN: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday 10.30-13.00 & 14.00-16.00
Wednesdays and Saturdays 10.00-13.00 only.
Closed each December and January and Bank Holidays.

ADMISSION FREE
South Molton Museum, Market Street (off the Square)
Telephone South Molton (0769) 3501 (ask for Museum)

Stuart Bass Pottery & Country Crafts
Church Street, South Molton
Telephone 2956

Craft workshop — specialist in decorative bird and animal forms. Also individual pieces, paintings and drawings.

OPEN all year
Monday to Saturday 08.00-13.00; 14.00-17.00
Closed Wednesday and Saturday afternoons

Admission Free

THORNE HOUSE CRAFTS

While you are enjoying the countryside around Exmoor, why not call in for a cup of tea at Thorne House, North Molton, opposite the Village Bakery. You may not be able to resist our delicious Devon Cream Tea and whilst we prepare it for you, you can admire our old oak beams and attractive elm tables or browse amongst the range of hand made gifts. Many of these are quite unique because we like things that are different and rather special as we're sure you do too.

Over Easter, then from Spring Holiday into October we are open afternoons including Sunday and by appointment - telephone N Molton 388

Welcome to the South Molton Area

South Molton in North Devon is a thriving market town on the southern fringes of Exmoor (market day Thursday, early closing Wednesday). Set among rolling hills, the town is surrounded by many picturesque villages. A rich historical heritage and pleasant rural setting provide a background to many interesting places to visit.

Several local attractions have come together to tell you more about themselves in this leaflet produced by South Molton Information Centre.

There is a warm welcome for you here - we wish you a very happy stay.

For Further Information Please Contact -

SOUTH MOLTON INFORMATION CENTRE
1 EAST STREET
SOUTH MOLTON
NORTH DEVON

Tel. South Molton 2378 or 2129

The information in this leaflet is provided by each attraction and is accepted in good faith by South Molton Information Centre. However the Centre can accept no responsibility for its accuracy.

Other Reports

Library and Information Research (LIR) Reports may be purchased from the British Library Publications Sales Unit, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ, UK. Details of some other LIR Reports are given below.

LIR Report 20. Flowerdew, A D J, Oldman, C M and Whitehead, C M E. *The pricing and provision of information: some recent official reports.* August 1984. pp viii + 96. ISBN 0 7123 3029 1.

The purpose of this report is to examine the economic principles relevant to the issues raised in some recent reports considering the production and dissemination of information in electronic form. It also seeks to compare these principles with those stated or implied in the text of the reports and to draw any justifiable policy conclusions. Since the production and dissemination of information have some characteristics which resemble those of the production and dissemination of ordinary economic goods and services, some which resemble more closely those of other types of economic activity such as transport, and some features which can be considered unique, the authors examine whether this was being taken into account in these reports. They also try to establish whether new theoretical results were being used or new empirical evidence cited, which would have implications elsewhere.

LIR Report 23. *Information demand and supply in British industry 1977-1983.* October 1983. pp xxii + 118. ISBN 0 7123 3033 X.

Between November 1982 and April 1983 a study was conducted into the effects of the current recession on the supply of technical and commercial information services in British industry. The purpose was to see how industrial information services have adjusted and to investigate how information providers outside industry have reacted to any changes in demand from industry. Questionnaires were distributed among 238 library and information service units in industry, and among 305 external information providers of various kinds. More than half of these provided responses that were analysed. There is evidence that the pattern of demand for, and supply of, information in British industry has changed substantially, and possibly permanently, since 1977.

LIR Report 24. Rudduck, J and Hopkins, D. *The sixth form and libraries: problems of access to knowledge.* July 1984. pp xii + 126. ISBN 0 7123 3034 8.

The concern of the project can be summarised in a statement by its director:

> It is about the transition of pupils to studentship ... moves from dependence on instruction to capacity for independent study — that kind of move depends on a change in the epistemology of the learner ... there must be a point when the person discovers something of the problematic nature of knowledge. Most people don't do that lower down [the school].

The project was designed as a multi-site case study programme involving teachers, students and librarians in 24 institutions covering a range of sixth form settings. The selection of institutions took account of the need to have access to different environmental and social settings and different levels of library provision. Interviews were the main method of data gathering, and they focused on a core of interrelated topics: academic study in the sixth form, pedagogy, books, libraries and the idea of independent learning.

LIR Report 25. Ratcliffe, F W with the assistance of Patterson, D. *Preservation policies and conservation in British libraries: report of the Cambridge University Library Conservation Project.* February 1984. pp xii + 134. ISBN 0 7123 3035 6.

The Cambridge Conservation Project had two immediate objectives: to establish the facts about preservation policies and practices in libraries in the UK and to identify the educational and training facilities available to librarians and practitioners. Nationwide surveys by questionnaires, interviews and seminars were among the methods used. The report makes recommendations for action in two areas, first within individual libraries, involving little or no additional expenditure and immediately applicable, secondly at a national level. Among the latter, the twin needs for cooperative action, for which no mechanism exists at present, and for a focal point for preservation, some sort of National Advisory and Research Centre, are of prime importance. The status, funding and location of the latter need further clarification but involvement of the British Library in any such undertaking seems essential to its success.

LIR Report 26. Teskey, F N. *Information retrieval systems for the future.* October 1984. pp viii + 72. ISBN 0 7123 3037 2.

In the first part of the report, the author describes those functions of free-text information systems regarded as fundamental by a number of users. He then goes on to look at some existing and proposed hardware and software methods for implementing such systems. Finally, he proposes a design for a new information retrieval system. Methods of implementing such a system are discussed and some possible applications are outlined.

LIR Report 27. Barrett, R. *Further developments in optical disc technology and applications.* July 1984. pp viii + 34. ISBN 0 7123 3038 0.

During a visit to the USA in April 1983, the author updated information on current developments in optical disc technology and applications. He looked at developments in both the optical video disc and the digital optical recording disc. The data presented in the report are based on information given in the form of discussions and technical papers by staff of the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine and BRS Medical.

LIR Report 28. Templeton, R and Witten, A. *Study of cataloguing computer software: applying* AACR2 *to microcomputer programs.* August 1984. pp viii + 77. ISBN 0 7123 3041 0.

Using education as an example, this project established and tested some guidelines for the cataloguing of microcomputer software, based on an examination of Chapter 9 of *AACR2.* Over 200 programs were catalogued, in three stages, two interpretive and one of application. The results of the project include recommendations for bibliographic control, including guidelines for publishers, and for cataloguing standards, and a brief manual of practice for cataloguers.

LIR Report 29. Shackel, B and Pullinger, D J. *BLEND—1: background and developments.* December 1984. pp xiv + 155, ISBN 0 7123 3042 9.

The report describes a four-year experimental programme jointly organised by two universities and called the Birmingham and Loughborough Electronic Network Development (BLEND). The aims are to assess the cost, efficiency and subjective impact of an electronic communication system, and to explore and evaluate alternative forms of user communication through an electronic journal and information network.

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LIR Report 30. Gadsden, S R and Adams, R J. *The administration of interlending by microcomputer.* December 1984. pp viii + 58. ISBN 0 7123 3044 5.

A systems analysis of some interlending departments was carried out and a questionnaire survey sent to a sample of British Library Lending Division users. From this a system specification was created and a number of software packages tested against this and other criteria. The selected package was tested against an experimental database, and a demonstration system set up.

LIR Report 31. Wilson, T D. *Office automation and information services: final report on a study of current developments.* March 1985. pp vi + 75. ISBN 0 7123 3045 3.

The report reviews the current developments in office automation and gives an impression of their impact on, and relevance to, information systems and services. The author conducted interviews with the managers of a number of the Department of Trade and Industry Office Automation test sites as well as in sites in the private sector.

LIR Report 32. Katzen, M. *Technology and communication in the humanities: training and services in universities and polytechnics in the UK.* March 1985. pp x + 121. ISBN 0 7123 3046 1.

A survey investigated the training provided for humanities students in locating reference sources; the extent of online searching for humanities users; the provision of instruction on techniques of oral and written presentation; and the availability and use of computers in the humanities.

LIR Report 33. Smith, J W T and Merali, Z. *Optical character recognition: the technology and its application in information units and libraries.* August 1985. pp xii + 125. ISBN 0 7123 3047 X.

The authors show where OCR fits in the range of electro-optic devices. They describe a survey of special libraries and information units concerning the use of OCR and discuss case studies of OCR applications. There are surveys of available machines of possible value in information or library applications and of OCR bureaux. This is followed by a guide to choosing an OCR machine for a specific purpose, a summary, recommendations and predictions about OCR.

LIR Report 35. Belkin, N J and Vickery, A. *Interaction in information systems: a review of research from document retrieval to knowledge-based systems.* December 1985. pp viii + 250. ISBN 0 7123 3050 X.

The report is a review of research connected with the interaction of users with information systems. This includes the interaction of users with skilled intermediaries carrying out searches on their behalf. The report arose from a proposed programme of research to collect and study data from all stages of the search process from the initial expression of an information need to evaluation of the search results. Its main focus is on computerised bibliographic systems but it includes a chapter on question-answering and expert systems.

LIR Report 36. Craddock, P. *The public library and blind people: a survey and review of current practice.* December 1985. pp xvi + 105. ISBN 0 7123 3051 8.

There was an investigation into services provided by public libraries for blind people. Findings are based partly upon a questionnaire sent to all public libraries in the UK. Personal visits were also made to selected libraries and other relevant agencies. Few libraries have identified the blind as a target group. Current trends in information technology and tape services provide incentives for libraries to establish or review policies and become more involved through in-house initiatives and in co-operation with other agencies. A national representative body for library and information services for the blind is suggested together with aspects requiring further research.

LIR Report 39. Mitev, N N, Venner, G M and Walker, S. *Designing an online public access catalogue: Okapi, a catalogue on a local area network.* December 1985. pp xiv + 254. ISBN 0 7123 3058 5.

The aim of the project was to produce an online public access catalogue (OPAC) on a local area network (LAN), that would be readily usable without training or experience, without sacrificing effectiveness or being tedious for experienced users. The result was a functioning prototype OPAC called Okapi, which was installed and evaluated in one of the Polytechnic of Central London's site libraries. There is a full description of Okapi under the headings: source file, indexing, search functions, user interaction and evaluation. There are also general discussions of these topics, and chapters on OPACs in general, LANs, and recommendations.

The South Molton Community Information Project was set up in March 1980 to research and develop the role of South Molton Library in relation to the information and advice needs of the town and its rural hinterland. The library authority worked in close co-operation with the Community Council of Devon, the Citizens Advice Bureau area office and local providers of information and advice.

The methodology included two surveys of need ("before" and "after") and an analysis of user reactions; monitoring of the development of the Information Centre; promotion of the Centre by means of village representatives and a monthly broadsheet; and assessing the contribution of the library to the work of the other provider agencies — and vice versa.

The report concludes that library authorities have an essential role to play in the development of community information in rural areas, irrespective of whether or not the service is provided in the library itself.

The project was extended for a third year to establish local management, apply for local funding and to consolidate and develop the work of the Information Centre. Terms of reference were agreed, a Centre Committee set up and a part-time co-ordinator appointed. Funding for the future was provided by county, district and parish councils.

The broadsheet and village representative network continued to promote the Centre and its agencies. Community information displays in the branch and mobile libraries and local information directories were compiled.

The report emphasises the importance of continuous liaison, co-operation and mutual support between many organisations in developing a sound basis from which to try to meet local needs.